

July
2014

ANIMATIONTM MAGAZINE

Disney's Dwarfs
Get a Makeover
in The 7D!

Annual Pitch
Party Results!
Comic-Con!
Batman at 75!
Phineas and
Ferb Star Wars!

The Evolution
of Transformers
VFX!

Matt Reeves
Talks Dawn of
the Planet of
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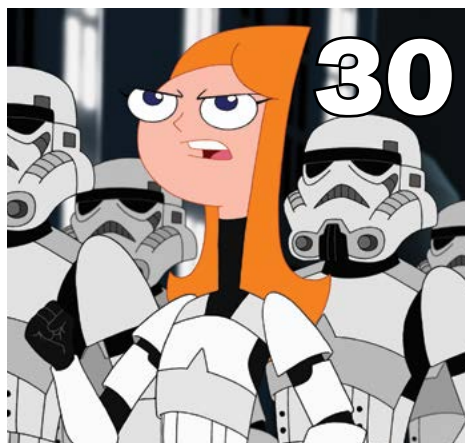
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July 2014



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The Toons of Summer

Nothing says freedom quite like summer. Most of us are long past the days when summer meant school was out and the only thing you had to worry about for the next few months was having fun, but the trade off seems worth it when there's so many cool new animated treats to enjoy.

So let's kick things off with a party – our annual Pitch Party, of course! Now in its 13th year, we still love opening up our pages to all of our talented readers so they can get their ideas for an animated show out there for fellow readers and, of course, our esteemed judges to enjoy. Turn to page 32 to see which pitch topped our judges' list and who gets to pitch their show directly to an executive who can make their dream a reality.

If that's not hot enough, then check out our coverage of *Planes: Fire & Rescue*, the new CG-animated feature from DisneyToon Studios. Like all the animation divisions at the Mouse House, DisneyToon has been seriously stepping up its game with recent releases, and *Planes: Fire & Rescue* is easily its most accomplished movie to date. With early reviews giving the movie thumbs up, this could be the sleeper hit of the summer. It certainly is a huge step up for DisneyToons from its origins as a home-video producer.

And there's no bigger event on the summer calendar in all of pop-culturedom than Comic-Con International: San Diego. I remember attending my first Comic-Con in 1993, when a mere 30,000 or so attended and the event was pretty exclusively comics-centric. Now, it draws a capacity crowd of 125,000 and spotlights such cool toons as *Steven Universe*, which is getting its first solo panel at the show – much to the delight of its creator, Rebecca Sugar, a longtime Comic-Con attendee. We also take a look at arguably the greatest character in all of comic books, Batman, as he celebrates his 75th anniversary. Oh, and *Animation Magazine* will be there, too. Be sure to swing by booth 1535 and say hi!

On the TV side of things, *The 7D* makes its debut after many years in development and features a voice cast that represents the *crème-de-la-crème* of the industry. And the nerd-out continues as we chat with Dan Povenmire and Jeff "Swampy" Marsh about the long-awaited *Phineas and Ferb Star Wars* special.

The visual-effects side of thing has hardly been loafing about and this issue we get the word on *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* straight from the director himself, Matt Reeves. And in a business where continuity is rare, we talk to ILM crewmembers who've been with the *Transformers* series right from the start and all the way through the smash hit *Transformers: Age of Extinction*.

And if that's not enough, we've got a few unexpected treats in store for you, including a look at the socially conscious indie film *Pen Up the Pigs*, a chat with *Regular Show* creator J.G. Quintel and the usual assortment of reviews and great columns.

As always, feel free to drop us a line and let us know how we're doing or suggest something you'd like to see in future issues. We love hearing from our readers!

Until next issue, stay cool!

Tom

Tom McLean
Editor
tom@animationmagazine.net

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"There was a real sophistication and elegance to (*Batman: The Animated Series*). It certainly appealed to kids but had a depth that really made it fascinating and interesting to watch for adult fans. I think visually, it was stylistically stunning."

– Jim Lee, co-publisher DC Comics, on the impact animation has had on Batman as he celebrates his 75th anniversary



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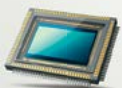
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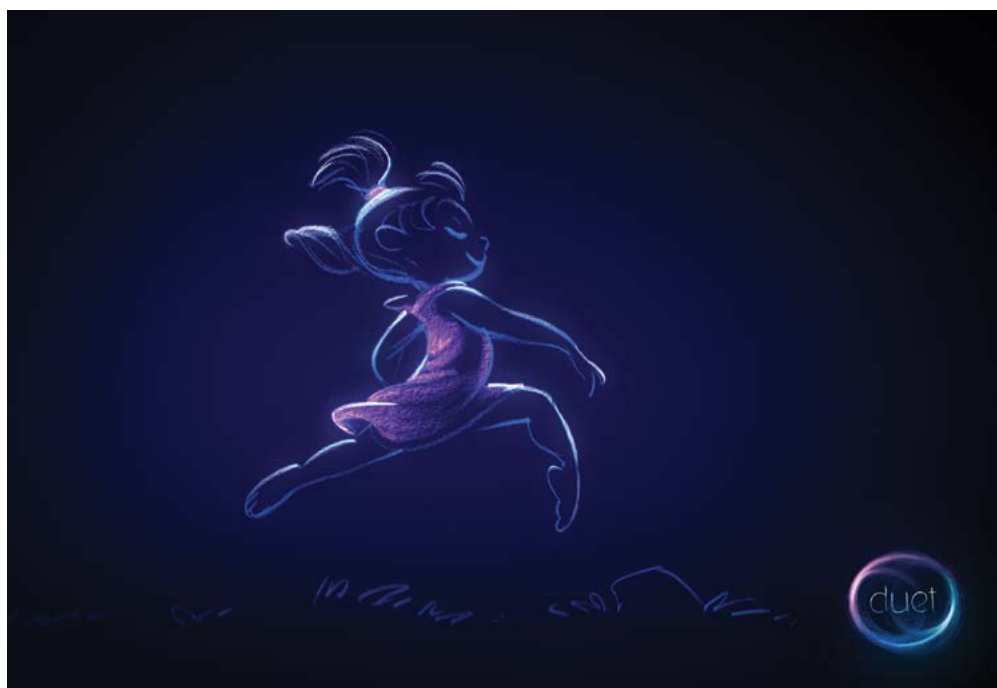
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FEATURES

Glen Keane Debuts Short 'Duet'

June 26: Acclaimed animator Glen Keane unveiled a first look at his latest and most personal project to date, *Duet*, as part of a special Advanced Technology and Projects session at the Google I/O Conference in San Francisco.

Animated in its entirety and directed by Keane – former Disney animator and creator of such beloved characters as Ariel, Beast, Aladdin, Pocahontas, Tarzan and Rapunzel – *Duet* tells the story of Mia and Tosh and how their individual paths in life weave together to create an inspired duet. *Duet* is the third in a series of Spotlight Stories, a new way of telling stories on mobile devices. It will officially launch later this year and will be available on all capable devices with proper hardware capabilities and OS version higher than Android 4.2.



child. But all that changed when she hit 12, and the difficulties of adolescence began. Wondering what was going on her mind led to the creation of *Inside Out*, which is about a 12-year-old girl named Riley and the emotions who live in her head: Anger, Disgust, Fear, Sadness and Joy. Joy has been the dominant emotion for most of Riley's life, but when Riley's family moves from Minnesota to San Francisco, Joy and Sadness are somehow knocked out of Riley's "head"-quarters and deep into the landscape of her mind. All of this is an opportunity to visualize various elements of the mind, and Docter and Rivera spent a lot of time researching these subjects to get even a basic handle on how people's brains work. Pixar also offered a look at a short ti-

tled *Lava* that will screen in front of *Inside Out*. Directed by Jim Murray and produced by Andrea Warren, the short began with a Hawaiian style song that Murphy himself sang and accompanied with a ukulele, followed by the short itself, which features a lonely volcano in the middle of the ocean and his dream of finding another volcano to love.

FEATURES

Report: DreamWorks Lays Off 40-50 in its Feature Film Division

June 30: The Animation Guild Blog reported layoffs in DreamWorks Animation's feature division.

According to a post on the blog, an estimated 40 to 50 employees were let go. TAG business representative Steve Hulett writes that move comes because the studio didn't have enough features requiring staff building front-end production elements, so employees in departments that were overstaffed were laid off and their contracts being paid out.

FEATURES

Pixar Teases 'Inside Out,' 'Lava' Short

June 20: Pixar Animation Studios gave journalists a quick look at *Inside Out*, a feature film due out in theaters June 19, 2015. Created by the *Up* duo of director Pete Docter and producer Jonas Rivera, this looks to be one of the more unusual and experimental offerings from the studio to date.

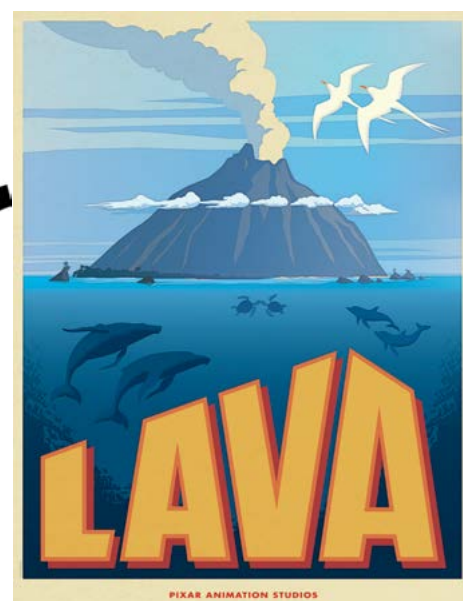
Docter was on hand to explain the origins of the movie, which came from his daughter Ellie – a very happy and bright girl as a

Disney · PIXAR
**INSIDE
OUT**

FESTS AND EVENTS

Disney Debuts 'Feast' Short at Annecy

June 11: If you were lucky enough to be at the Annecy International Animation Festival, you may have seen an advance screening of *Feast*, a new animated short film from Walt





Feast

Disney Animation Studios that most folks will see in front of *Big Hero 6* when it opens Nov. 7.

Much like *Get a Horse!* before it, the experience of watching *Feast* is hard to convey through a description. The movie's IMDb page is accurate in writing:

"The story of one man's love life is seen through the eyes of his best friend and dog, Winston, and revealed bite by bite through the meals they share."

But the experience of watching this movie is far more involving and emotional.

In presenting the film, director Patrick Osborne talked about the unique look of the film, which has a simplified design that he and the filmmakers decided to ground in reality by applying classic camera effects such as a shallow depth of field. The film also is told from Winston's point of view, i.e., looking up from a dog's point of view.

The film is a result of a shorts program that the studio finalized after the success of its previous two shorts: *Paperman*, which was attached to *Wreck-it-Ralph*; and *Get a Horse!*, which was seen in front of the mega-hit *Frozen*. The program is open to pitches from anyone in the company, with top exec John Lasseter making the final call on which pitch will be produced – and tossing responsibility for making it back to the pitcher.

Osborne pulled in help from around the studio to make the film, which was produced by Kristina Reed and has Jeff Turley on production design.

TELEVISION

Cartoon Network Sets TV Return of 'Powerpuff Girls' for 2016

June 16: Turner Broadcasting has announced that 2016 will see the global return of Craig McCracken's Emmy-winning *The Powerpuff Girls*. Cartoon Network chief content officer Rob Sorcher made the announcement at Licensing Expo in Las Vegas, saying the reboot will include a new TV series from Cartoon Network Studios and worldwide licensing program.

The original series launched on the channel in 1998 and ran for 78 episodes, racking up two Emmy Awards and five nominations and winning over fans around the world. The show also inspired a feature film in 2003, a tenth anniversary special and the re-imagined CG special *The Powerpuff Girls: Dance Pantsed* – which will get its U.K. debut on Boomerang on June 26 at 4 p.m. *Powerpuff Girls* is one of the top-grossing Cartoon Network brands of all time, with more than \$2.5 billion in retail sales since its debut.

VFX AND TECH

Toon Boom Releases Version 11 of its Harmony Animation Software

June 11: Two-time Emmy Award recipient Toon Boom Animation has released version 11 of its Harmony animation software.

The new version offers the best of the vector and bitmap worlds in the drawing stage and brings warped drawings to the next

level while delivering significant timeline, workflow and user interface enhancements.

FEATURES

Sylvain Chomet Moving Forward on Hybrid Feature 'The Thousand Miles'

June 16: Acclaimed French director Sylvain Chomet (*The Illusionist*, *The Triplets of Belleville*) has revealed he is pursuing the feature project *The Thousand Miles* with London studio Th1ng, *Variety* reports. The film will be developed and produced by Savoy & Gregory and is inspired by various works and unpublished writings and drawings by Federico Fellini. Demian Gregory and Tommaso Rossellini co-wrote the screenplay.

The Thousand Miles will blend live-action and hand-drawn animation to tell the story of a middle-aged count who takes part in Le Mille Miglia car race. The journey then transforms into a magical odyssey during which the count reflects on his youth and life experiences. The count will be played both in the live action and animated segments by Italian prince Emanuele Filiberto. *The Thousand Miles* is expected to begin production early next year.

FESTS AND EVENTS

BYU Students' 'Owned' Wins Gold at 2014 Student Academy Awards

Owned, an animated film by BYU students Daniel Clark and Wesley Tippetts, won the gold medal placement in the animation category at the 2014 Student Academy Awards.

The silver medal went to *Higher Sky*, by Teng Cheng of USC; and the bronze to *Yamashita*, by Hayley Foster of Loyola Marymount University.

The gold, silver and bronze medals were announced and presented by actors Adrian Grenier, Nate Parker and Oscar nominee Demian Bichir, and the Oscar-winning directing/producing team from the animated feature *Frozen*: Jennifer Lee, Chris Buck and Peter Del Vecho.



Owned

Passings

Radio host and voice-over actor **Casey Kasem** died June 15 at the age of 82. In addition to four decades of radio celebrity, Kasem lent his vocal talents to numerous cartoons over the years, including Robin on *The Batman/Superman Hour* and *Super Friends*, and Shaggy in *Scooby-Doo, Where Are You* and its many reimaginings from the late 1960s onward.

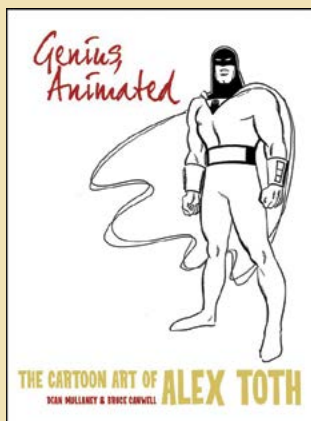
Books We Love



Genius Animated: The Cartoon Art of Alex Toth

By Dean Mullaney and Bruce Canwell
[IDW, \$49.99]

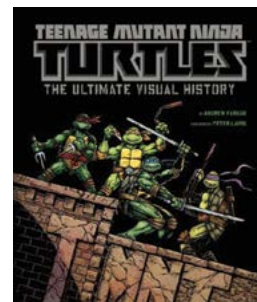
Accustomed as we are to a steady release of animation art books, such things were much more rare in the halcyon days of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s – especially for TV shows. Rectifying this in high style is this tome – the third in a series chronicling the life and work of comics and animation legend Toth, who for years designed entire shows for Hanna-Barbera – that is a veritable treasure chest of examples of how to design characters and pitch animated shows. Looking through this volume, it's impossible not to think of the tremendous potential so many of these shows had and how great they could have been if they'd lived up to Toth's high standards.



Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: The Ultimate Visual History

By Andrew Farago
[Insight Editions, \$50]

It's been 30 years since the heroes in a half-shell first exploded into the comics scene as unlikely candidates for a huge franchise. Created by Peter Laird and Kevin Eastman, the Turtles were at first a parody of *X-Men* and Frank Miller comics. But the self-published comic somehow connected, first with comics readers and then with animation executives and then with children the world over. This eminently readable and thoroughly researched tome is an obvious labor of love for Farago, who heads the Cartoon Art Museum in San Francisco. It's packed full of rare art and photos, including lots of facsimile documents and a reproduction of the very first *TMNT* comic. Well worth the time for anyone who grew up with echoes of "Cowabunga!" in their heads.



Escapo

By Paul Pope, with Shay Plummer
[Z2 Comics, \$24.99]

Few comics artists have been as electrifying in the past 20 years as Paul Pope, whose unique and compelling art style has been a significant influence across media – fashion, design and, yes, animation. The frustration for fans has always been the scarcity of some of his major works – corrected here by the release of his long out-of-print 1999 graphic novel in color for the first time and including more than 50 pages of bonus material. The tale about an escape artist seeking to elude death itself reads like a lost arthouse masterpiece, offering a unique and unforgettable experience that shows just how good comics can be in the hands of a modern master.



Super Secret Crisis War! #1

By Louise Simonson and Derek Charm
[IDW, \$3.99]

It's hard not to get just a little bit excited at the prospect of an old-fashioned comic-book crossover event featuring classic Cartoon Network characters, and this first issue doesn't disappoint. The story begins with the League of Extraordinary Villains – comprised of Aku, Vilgax, Mojo Jojo and Mandark – using robots from each other's worlds to trap Samurai Jack, the Powerpuff Girls, Ben 10, Dexter and Ed, Edd & Eddy so they can use their powers to conquer the world.

If that sounds a bit confusing, it's par for the course in crossovers like this, as is the plethora of tie-ins as this six-issue series will be supplemented by five tie-in one-shots featuring *Johnny Bravo*, *The Grim Adventures of Billy and Mandy*, *Foster's Home for Imaginary Friends*, *Cow and Chicken* and *KND: Kids Next Door*. It's all kind of crazy, but it's also a lot of fun and a very cool way to revisit some of the funkier Cartoon Network characters.

– Tom McLean





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July Planner

1 Magic and martial arts abound on today's DVD releases: **Legend of Korra – Book 2: Spirits, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Vol. 5** and **Monster High: Clawesome Double Feature**.



2 A group of young pals set out to help an adorable CG alien rebuild his spaceship in *Relativity Media's Earth to Echo*.



3-6 Take in screenings, panels, concerts and more at **Anime Expo** in Los Angeles. (anime-expo.org)

ANIME EXPO AX 2014
Los Angeles Convention Center July 3 - July 6

4-12 Signe Bauman's *Rocks in My Pockets* will premiere at the **Karlovy Vary Int'l Film Festival** in the Czech Republic. (kviff.com)



11 Those hyper-intelligent simians are at it again in Matt Reeves' **Dawn of the Planet of the Apes**.



13 Happy birthday to workaholic voice actor **Tom Kenny**.

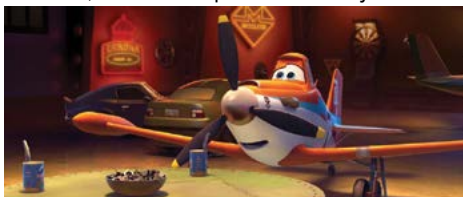


14 Studio founder **Dave Fleischer** and Disney animator **Walt Stanchfield** were both born on this day.

15 Today's Blu-ray and DVD offerings include **Rio 2**, **Wrinkles**, **Black Dynamite: Season 1** and **Deadman Wonderland: Complete Series Classic**.



18 Dusty the cropduster tackles the fury of nature in **Planes: Fire & Rescue**, the new sequel from DisneyToon.



22 Shinji Aramaki's **Appleseed Alpha** and Spanish-produced **Justin and the Knights of Valor** are today's animation home entertainment highlights.



24-27 Geeks from around the world will converge on San Diego for the pop-culture mega event, **Comic-Con International**. (comic-con.org)

25 Dwayne Johnson stars as the legendary hero in **Hercules**, adapted from *The Thracian Wars* graphic novel by director Brett Ratner.



29 Keep the out-of-school kids occupied with new DVDs: **Adventure Time: Princess Day**, **My Little Pony Friendship Is Magic: The Keys of Friendship** and **Teen Titans Go! Season 1, Part 2**.



To get your company's events and products listed in this monthly calendar, please e-mail mercedes@animationmagazine.net.



BIG IDEAS START SMALL



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Burning Brightly

DisneyToon Studios does its homework to make *Planes: Fire & Rescue* a theatrical release worthy of real-life firefighters' courage. By Tom McLean.

Fighting fires is serious business for the brave men and women who are out there every day in the thick of it, and honoring their skill and courage with a tale both emotional and factual was the top order for the crew of *Planes: Fire & Rescue*.

The CGI-animated feature from DisneyToon Studios was conceived from the ground up as a movie that would be worthy of its subject matter and the studio's plans for it as a mid-summer release, due July 18 in theaters in stereoscopic 3-D.

Planes: Fire & Rescue picks up where last year's racing comedy *Planes* left off. Now a champion racer, Dusty Crophopper (voiced by Dane Cook) learns racing has damaged his engine, which cannot be replaced. When a mishap at Propwash Junction leaves it without fire protection, Dusty steps in and heads up to get certified with the air attack team at Piston Peak National Park. There, under the tutelage of Blade Ranger (Ed Harris), Dusty finds renewed purpose as he takes on the very difficult task of learning to fight fires in the park on a daily basis.

The film also features the voices of Julie Bowen as Li'l Dipper, Curtis Armstrong as Maru, John Michael Higgins as Cad, Hal Holbrook as Mayday, Wes Studi as Windlifter, Regina King as Dynamite and the real-life couple Jerry Stiller and Anne Meara as Harvey and Winnie.

Studio veteran Bobs Gannaway directed

and co-wrote with Jeff Howard the feature, which – despite the first *Planes* having only been released last year – has been in the works since 2010, one year after work began on the first film.

Bring on the Consultants

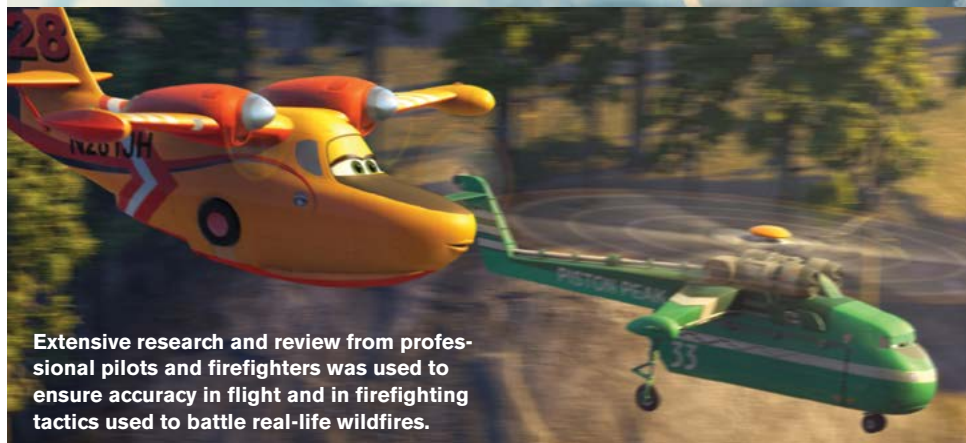
But unlike *Planes*, which began production as a direct-to-video feature, *Planes: Fire & Rescue* was designed from the ground up to be a theatrical release and took a meticulous approach to getting all the details just right. The film hired more than 100 consultants, from the pilots of CalFire, who fight fires on a daily basis; to master helicopter pilot Chuck Aaron, who reviewed all the helicopter flight scenes for accuracy.

But it was finding an emotional entry point that was the most difficult and essential nut to crack. Gannaway recalls an early table read that clarified the story's problems and lead him to ask the questions that lead to solutions.

"I thought: 'If Dusty can't race again what would he do? How does he deal with that?'" he says. "We went in and started investigating engine problems and started thinking about, internally, how Dusty could be dealing with that, and it ended up creating a more complex story because that's the internal issue with Dusty while he's dealing with this external problem."

A little more research found a way to bridge the two worlds, Gannaway says. Most of the planes used to fight fires were built and used for another purpose first, making firefighting a sort





Extensive research and review from professional pilots and firefighters was used to ensure accuracy in flight and in firefighting tactics used to battle real-life wildfires.



of “second career” for many types of planes. Plus, a crop duster plane like Dusty was the first plane modified to fight fires from the air.

Throw in the drama that comes from there being more than 50,000 wildfires a year in the United States – the film points out that only the big ones get attention – there was plenty of dramatic material to mine that would complicate and deepen the entire world of *Planes*.

Vehicles or Characters?

Bringing it to life was no small challenge with the animators having only inanimate objects as characters and creative limits imposed by the decision to make the vehicles as realistic as possible. Wood needed to behave like wood; metal like metal; glass like glass – and exceptions were rarely allowed.

“One of the difficult things to get the animators to believe in was that these are vehicles that talk; they’re not creatures that you’re posing out,” says animation supervisor Ethan Hurd. “We could do that – we could lift them up, have them gesture like humans, walk

“There’s less controls (on these characters), which makes it easier to animate, but a good animator can do well with limited controls and a bad animator can still do poorly with unlimited controls.”

– Ethan Hurd, Animation Supervisor



around like humans – and I’ve seen tests of that, and they just look like four-legged creatures, like it’s a brand-new, weird four-legged creature; it’s no longer a vehicle.”

“Those limitations become your strengths,” says Gannaway. “The rigidity of the wings is what makes the film feel real. Now, from an animation standpoint, that leaves you somewhat reliant on the eyes and face for a lot of the emotion, but also the way that aircraft tilt and lean, so you get a lot more posing out of the characters than you might expect.”

There were a number of scenes in the film that excelled in the subtlety of the animation,

which Hurd attributes to the talents of his crew of about 60 animators who worked nine months on the movie. “There’s less controls (on these characters), which makes it easier to animate, but a good animator can do well with limited controls and a bad animator can still do poorly with unlimited controls, so the basic principles still apply,” he says.

The film’s ambition is on display early on in a mostly silent scene in which Dusty tries to approach elderly fire engine Mayday, who has just been relieved of his duties. Shot from behind, Mayday’s face cannot be seen, but the character’s sorrow manages to come through in the



body language.

"This was always intended for the big screen, so we shot it for the big screen, making choices like that where the characters turned away from the camera or were almost whispering a line, because that's what would happen," says Gannaway.

Learning to Burn

The fire and the accompanying smoke was handled by the visual effects crew on the movie. Gannaway says two and a half years were spent on developing a fire system for the movie that could create a library of fire effects for use in the

mid-ground and background of shots, and custom fire for more prominent uses.

All of the effects work required the effects stage to be moved up in the pipeline to handle the 662 effects shots out of a total 1,224 in the film.

As in *Planes* and the *Cars* films, the setting of *Planes: Fire & Rescue* is a stylized and altered version of real-world places. Art director Toby Wilson says he did extensive research into national parks to create Piston Peak National Park, which covers 20 square miles and includes some 2.5 million trees. He says he drew elements from Yellowstone, Yosemite, Arches and Sequoia national parks, adding in subtle mechanized ele-

ments to the foliage and the design of the park's Grand Fusel Lodge.

The lodge design also incorporated Native American elements, which play a key role in the film with firefighting tanker Windlifter being of Cherokee descent and the character delivering a key plot point via an ancient Native American myth.

Cheese With 'CHiPs'

It's far from all gloom and doom, however. One of the funniest moments in the film comes when Dusty learns Blade Ranger was a former actor on a series titled *CHoPs* – a helicopter version of the 1977-1983 TV series *CHiPs* – and features a shot-for-shot parody of the classic show's opening credits and guest voice by Erik Estrada.

Producer Ferrell Barron says he pitched the idea for Blade because he wanted the film to feature a different kind of mentor than seen in *Cars* or the first *Planes*. The idea was for Blade to have been unable to save his partner on the show during a stunt gone wrong because he wasn't a real, trained rescue vehicle, prompting a career change to firefighting. "I definitely didn't want to have a broken mentor, I wanted a fully realized character," he says. "Dusty doesn't need to heal Blade, Blade has come to terms with the tragic event in his life, and he's moved on and can give that wisdom to Dusty."

As the film approaches release, Gannaway says he is most pleased that the real firefighters who have seen the film were pleased with what they've seen. "You just want to do right by them," he says. ♦

Art director Toby Wilson says the designs for Piston Peak National Park's Grand Fusel Lodge was inspired by real lodges at parks like Yosemite and Yellowstone.





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Animation with a Mission

Independent filmmaker, community activist and co-founder of the Women with Knives tour Kelly Gallagher combines her love of art and passion for social justice in her collage animation. Her latest short, *Pen Up the Pigs*, addresses the roots of racially motivated policing and is creating a stir at film festivals around the globe. See more of her work at purpleriot.com. By Mercedes Milligan.

What inspired you to pursue animation?

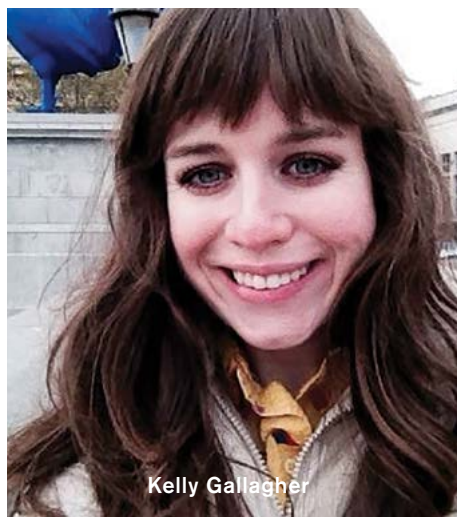
It actually happened a bit accidentally. I was an undergrad in the film program at Penn State, working on the first film I ever made for a class, and I just started playing with the camera and handwriting my title cards and credits on paper. I thought it would look interesting if the text was moving a bit, so I just started having fun playing and learning the camera and what it could do and what writing out my film title 30 different times on different paper would look like, filming each one for a short time and editing it all together quickly. Before I knew it, every live-action film project I had to make for a class included some scene of stop-motion. I had too much fun doing it, and just couldn't stop.

How did you learn the craft?

I was essentially self-taught for the first few years I animated. I was in a film program that didn't have any animation focus, but a couple classes that skimmed over some basic things like direct animation, painting on celluloid. So I learned how to scratch 16mm film and paint on clear leader and was inspired by a lot of experimental films we would watch in class. Once I got out of school I went to New York and worked for the amazing animator and filmmaker Martha Colburn who does beautiful, politically charged cutout animation collage, and painting. Working for her and a handful of other animators in NYC, like Richard O'Connor and Jeff Scher, I learned a lot of imperative technical skills that have helped me further develop my animation craft.

Who are your major animation/filmmaking influences?

Some major animation influences of mine are: Martha Colburn, Kelly Sears, Stacey Steers, Lewis Klahr and Lotte Reiniger. ... A non-animator filmmaker who was a huge influence to me early on was Lizzie Borden, who directed the radical cult classic film *Born in Flames*. Craig Baldwin's work and others who appropriate found footage and practice *détour-*



nement in various ways play a major role in how I think about the political possibilities of creating new meanings from found materials.

What is the key message you sought to present with *Pen Up the Pigs*?

Thematically, I wanted to visually explore historical connections between slavery and modern day racist policing and mass incarceration. I wanted to also explore violence, and make a film that was explicitly supportive and understanding of more violent means of resistance

during struggles against racism, white supremacy and oppression. I wanted to challenge our ideas of what the word "violence" even means. White supremacy and racism are everyday violences against people of color in our country. Racist policing and mass incarceration are institutionalized systems of violence.

Aesthetically I wanted to explore the political possibilities of collage. ... Utilizing collage in *Pen Up the Pigs* was imperative because it allowed me to explicitly bring light to links between slavery and modern day policing and mass incarceration. Conversely, It also allowed me to clash different worlds together, like placing the world of nature, animals and flowers against the world of people engaged in struggle. Every time someone in the film fights back against oppression or speaks out against racism, flowers blossom and bloom and gesture towards the new life that is born and created out of struggle.

What is your creative process for making films?

My creative process involves a lot of heavy researching during the preproduction stage. For example, for *Pen Up the Pigs* I researched the origins of the Philadelphia Police Department since I'm from the Philadelphia area, and





Pen Up the Pigs uses hand-made animation techniques to convey a message about slavery, racism and modern-day mass incarceration.

I found these horrific beginnings of policing in Philadelphia that mirrored the South's slave patrols.

I generally research the film topics extensively and then I begin my search for images to cut out. I go to used bookstores and scour tons of books, scanning the pages for pictures and visual sparks. For *Pen Up the Pigs*, very early on I found an amazing book of giant pictures of pistols and rifles with the most beautiful color and detail. Alongside my used-bookstore scouring, I also do a lot of extensive Internet image researching. Early on in the beginning of my Google image research, I was noticing these mirror images of slave-owners beating slaves and police officers beating protestors of color. When I found all these images I knew I wanted to juxtapose them during one of the very early scenes on the plantation in *Pen Up the Pigs*.

What techniques, technology and equipment do you use?

All the animation I do is completely by hand. For *Pen Up the Pigs*, I used paper cutouts that I animated on a multi-tiered system of plastic panes, so that I can have different backgrounds and changing foregrounds and play with depth and shadow. It's all truly a pretty simple set-up, as I just use house lamps for lighting and a digital DSLR camera on a tripod to shoot stills while I animate.

How does animation help facilitate social commentary?

I believe that handcrafted animation is especially suited for exploring political and social topics and histories because handcrafted animation is itself such a radical aesthetic. Handmade animation makes labor processes visible. For example, when we see the scissor marks on paper, or handwritten animated text or hand-painted rotoscoped imagery, we are reminded that the filmmaker is a worker themselves, laboring over the process of animation and cultural production.

Handcrafted cinema is also well suited to be utilized to explore political themes because it is a fairly accessible medium ... anyone with access to a camera and some paper and scissors can make a handcrafted cut-out animation. In my mind, handcrafted cinema is one of the most radical aesthetics because it makes labor visible and the human relations of cultural production more transparent – and it also is one of the most accessible modes of filmmaking that exist today.

Are there challenges to using the medium this way?

The major challenge to using animation to facilitate social and political commentary would probably be time. It takes some time to make an animation, but that shouldn't be discouraging. I actually think animation can have more immediacy than people realize. The more you

animate, the quicker you can get with it. And often times some of the shortest films I've seen are the most politically poignant.

What kind of response have you received for *Pigs*?

Pen Up the Pigs has allowed me to engage in the most rewarding and interesting post-screening Q&A's of any film I've made yet. It's received acclaim from festivals, it won the Helen Hill Award at Indie Grits and it is currently being programmed in the Artists' Film Biennial at the ICA in London. However there are always a couple audience members who are a bit unsettled by the film and it's radically left politics. ... The film has also allowed me to engage in some really great conversations with some audience members debating about pacifism and violence during struggles of resistance.

Are you working on a new film currently?

I am currently mid-production on an experimental documentary entitled *John Brown in Iowa*, which is actually my first live-action film in a very long time (though there will certainly be some animation mixed in, of course!). And I am just beginning production on a 20-minute animated biopic entitled *Relentless Resistance: Cindy's Story*, which explores the life of an amazing radical activist, Cindy, and her struggles as an undocumented woman in the United States. ♦



Tom Taylor

A Deep Talent

Writer Tom Taylor has been a successful playwright, a hot comic-book writer and now is poised to become a hit in animation with the upcoming series *The Deep*. By Tom McLean.

Tom Taylor is one of the hottest names in comic books right now. A former playwright, he broke in to comics in 2009 writing *Star Wars* comics for Dark Horse. He's since gone on to write the series *Earth 2* for DC as well as *Injustice: Gods Among Us*, a digital-first prequel to the hit videogame that's the best-selling digital title in Western comics history.

Now, he's got his sights set on animation, turning a graphic novel series he created with artist James Brouwer called *The Deep* into an original series from Technicolor set to debut next year.

The Australian writer says his career path is anything but normal, and includes a stint as a child-care professional before he became a successful playwright — a vocation that was creatively satisfying but lacking in other ways.

"It sounds impressive that you have plays on four continents, until you realize that I was paid about \$50, and realized that theater is a bit like a crime in that it doesn't pay," he says. But one of his plays struck a chord with award-winning New Zealand artist Colin Wilson, who adapted into a comic Taylor's play *The Example*, which is about an unattended

briefcase on a train platform.

The work impressed Dark Horse Comics enough to offer Taylor the writing gig on the *Star Wars: Invasion* series Wilson was drawing. "They obviously saw something in a 10-page comic about a briefcase on a train platform and went, 'Yes, that guy can write for *Star Wars*,'" Taylor says. "It doesn't make a lot of sense, but that's literally how it happened."

The Fan Factor

A longtime comic-book fan, Taylor took to the medium so quickly that longtime Dark Horse VP Randy Stradley said he'd never seen anything like it. "I had been a fan all my life of this medium and the more I read of them, the more I understood it," says Taylor. "When it came time to finally do it, I was handed *Star Wars*, which had helped because I've always known *Star Wars* as well. I knew the voices of Luke Skywalker and Han Solo and all of that and suddenly I was being paid to play with the toys I played with as a kid."

Getting into the medium opened up a whole new world for Taylor. "Everything I

learned about dialog, I probably learned as a playwright," he says. "What comics does is it just completely expands you and expands your imagination. It takes you a while, but eventually you realize that you can write anything and that's exactly what the artist will draw."

Taylor hit the ball out of the park with *Injustice: Gods Among Us*, which has become a phenomenal hit in the still-new digital comics arena as well as in print editions. Setting up the game, in which Superman has lost his moral compass and taken over the world, the series chronicles the Man of Steel's fall from grace and attempts by other DC characters to halt his decline. The comic's third year, which Taylor describes as Superman versus magic, has just been announced.

Exploring Worlds Below

Obviously, a writer as productive as this isn't going to stop at working on other people's characters, and Taylor was inspired by his experience as a father to two boys in creating what became *The Deep*, about a family exploring the hidden depths of the oceans.

"I wanted something that I could read with my children that I could find entertaining as well as them so I wanted to create a true all ages book," he says. "I was also disappointed with the diversity scene in comics and I wanted to make sure any comic I made for all ages showed more diversity than your standard Western comic."

Setting it in the oceans seemed ideal, with Taylor citing the recent discovery of giant squids that show just how little is really known about the waters that cover 70 percent of Earth.

Working together, Taylor and Brouwer developed *The Deep* as a series of original graphic novels. The first two were published by Gestalt Comics and quickly gained the attention of Stephen Wendland at Technicolor, who was spearheading the company's jump beyond providing animation and filmmaking services to developing original content.

"We saw it first as a graphic novel and I have to say that everyone on my development team had the exact same reaction to the first graphic novel," says Wendland. "We all said this is great writing, beautiful visuals and there's nothing else like it out there."

Taylor is writing many of the scripts for the 26-episode series, which is being produced in Australia via A. Stark Productions. Brouwer is art director on the series, and the look is one that very much attempts to stay true to the comic.

A New Look

"So much of the animation is dictated by the environment, the setting, which is underwater," says Taylor. "So we're seeing these very, very big blues and bioluminescence coming in and then these small coral forests that everything goes through. So it's hard to describe, it's hard to say it looks like *Max Steel* or something because it really is its own thing, and having James as the art director as well means we're trying to make it look as much like the graphic novels as well and we're really succeeding."

According to Wendland, the show has on board several high-profile broadcast partners in a number of territories.

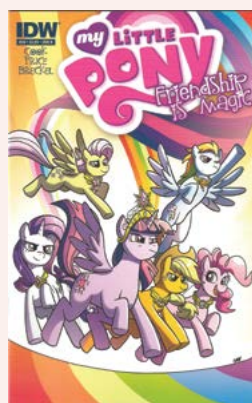
And while Taylor may be too busy to make the trek this year to Comic-Con because *The Deep* is in the midst of production, he's not giving up comics by any stretch and he's poised to become a hot talent in animation, too.

"Just last week, I finished reading one of his recent scripts and I can say it was a genuine page turner," says Wendland. ♦

License to Toon!

Comics publishers find a hot niche with hip adaptations of new and old animated show. By Tom McLean.

Once, many moons ago, the comic book racks used to be as full of titles based on cartoons and funny animals as they were of superheroes. And while the guys and gals in tights still dominate the comics scene, an increasing number of hip licensed comics based on animated shows are finding a successful niche in the market.



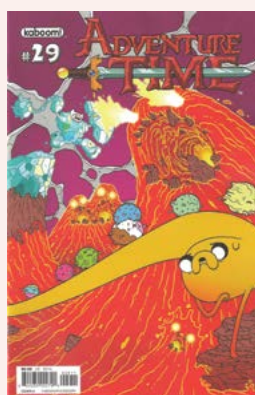
No title exemplifies this more than *Adventure Time*, which has spawned in two short years a huge amount of comic book material via a steady stream of miniseries, specials, annual, collected editions and more from ka-boom!, the all-ages imprint of Boom! Studios.

Much of the comic's success comes from the quality of its content. Boom! founder and CEO Ross Richie says it was key when Cartoon Network accepted the publisher's idea of eschewing strictly on-model artwork to allow a wider range of art styles.

"Typically, animation companies are very focused on doing on-model material," he says. "A lot of credit goes to the licensing department at Cartoon Network because they were supportive of that and it injected a lot of excitement into the titles."

Boom! Studios has been involved in licensing all kinds of properties since it was founded in 2005, handling everything from *Pixar* and *The Muppets* to *Planet of the Apes*, *Die Hard* and *Farscape*.

It currently licenses animated properties such as *Peanuts* and *Garfield* and has



a deal with Cartoon Network that gives Boom! the first option to license comics based on its new shows. That's led to successful comics based on *Regular Show*, *The Amazing World of Gumball* and, starting in August, *Steven Universe*.

Licensing comics helps independent publishers raise their profiles and publish books that can reach a wider audience than the die-hard superhero fans comic book shops traditionally serve. "Licensing comics guarantees you an audience," says Richie. "Whatever brand it is ... you know that there are fans who watch the shows and are potential readers."

Licensing comics is also a way to keep older IPs active after they're off the air. For example, IDW Publishing has picked up a number of older Cartoon Network properties in addition to currently active ones like *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic*. It is publishing this summer a traditional superhero crossover event

titled *Super Secret Crisis War!*, featuring the likes of *Powerpuff Girls*, *Samurai Jack*, *Ben 10*, *Dexter's Laboratory* and *Ed, Edd & Eddy*.



That approach remains a potent one in comics, even for a major publisher like DC Entertainment, which publishes comics based on *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe* and *Scribblenauts*.

"Sometimes, (these properties) are hot for a while and then take a break, so doing comics allows us to keep those properties out there," says DC co-publisher Jim Lee. ♦

A Sweet Return

Steven Universe creator Rebecca Sugar returns to her fan roots with her first show's first solo panel at Comic-Con. By Tom McLean.

Comic-Con began as a simple gathering of fans celebrating the stuff they loved with each other. And it's still true for Rebecca Sugar, creator of Cartoon Network's *Steven Universe*, whose enthusiasm for her show's first solo panel at the massive convention makes the idea of getting together with 125,000 of your closest fellow fans appealing, exciting and even fun.

"I really can't wait to hear the kind of things people will ask about the show, because we fill it with a lot of secrets," says Sugar, a self-described "really big fan" of cartoons who was nominated for two Emmys as a storyboard artist on *Adventure Time*. "Some things I can't answer, but I want to know what people are wondering about."

That enthusiasm is appropriate for *Steven Universe*, which debuted in November and has developed a devoted fan base as well as solid ratings hit and critical acclaim. The series, about a boy who inherits a magical gem from his mother and hangs out with a trio of warrior women who summon magical weapons they use to defend the world from evil threats, is essentially "by fans for fans," says Sugar.

"As someone who was such a fan, who went to Comic-Con in the past and traded comics with people and went to panels for cartoons, I know how much people are going to pay attention and how much little things are going to matter — because they would have mattered to me," says Sugar.

Cast Members Assemble!

Attendees will see at least one first at the panel, which will be moderated New Jer-

sey-based comic Tom Scharpling, who plays the voice of Steven's father, Greg Universe, and has not met any of his other cast members.

"We're definitely going to show some secret unaired clips and I really can't wait to answer lots of questions," says Sugar. "I hope to also do something with music and I have lots of plans. I'm going to have to figure out what we have time for because I want to do it all."

Spotlighting the cast and crew is another goal for Sugar. "I really tried to make the show flexible enough that we could all have it be personal to us," she says. "The more we all learn I think the more interesting and specific it gets."

ven to me," she says. "And he's very genuine, which is really right for Steven."

Creating a Community

The same goes for the trio of actresses voicing the warriors: Deedee Magno Hall as Pearl, Michaela Dietz as Amethyst and Estelle as Garnet.

"The fact that Pearl is such a maternal character is really all Deedee, which seems really natural, and Michaela's Amethyst voice is really her voice and she's just the coolest person I know, so that's been fun to write for

because it's very natural," Sugar says. "And Estelle makes Garnet Garnet. The way that she says things, it's like nobody else would say them quite like her. And the way that she does fight sounds always blows me away."

For Callison, the ability to record most of the time with other cast members makes *Steven Universe* his favorite show to work on. "It creates a community," he says. "And it's really nice because it allows you to build off each other."

The whole celebration is perfect for Sugar, who professes her love for comics like *Hellboy* and *The Goon*. And while having a panel for your show is ex-



"I know how much people are going to pay attention and how much little things are going to matter — because they would have mattered to me."

— Rebecca Sugar, Creator, *Steven Universe*



I can't wait for people to see the episodes that are coming up because they get really good."

The cast, lead by 16-year-old Zach Callison, has helped shape the show's characters to the point where performers and characters are inseparable, Sugar says. "Even when he's playing Steven in a way that is silly or sort of comically innocent or a little dumb, it can't be divorced from the fact that Zach himself is so sharp and smart that it always feels like Ste-

tremely cool, conventions can't help but bring out the fan even in someone as accomplished as Sugar.

"I've been to a lot of Comic-Cons as a comic artist, going around picking up comics that I wanted and liked, and meeting artists that I liked, so I think it'll be interesting to be there with the show and with the crew," she says. "But I'll also try to sneak off to actually pick up some comics." ♦



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Change Keeps Caped Crusader Young

Key projects in comics, animation and countless other media have made Batman more popular than ever as he celebrates his 75th anniversary. By Tom McLean.

He's survived the death of his parents, countless villainous schemes, the sci-fi craze of the 1950s and the campy 1960s, and numerous grim and gritty future timelines. But through it all, the caped crusader known as Batman has proven to be one of the most resilient and enduringly popular characters in all of fiction.

Though he was born in the pages of the then-new medium known as the comic book, animation has been a driving force in Batman's evolution over the past 75 years. And no piece of animation has proven more influential than *Batman: The Animated Series*.

Created as a TV tie-in that could profit from the success of Tim Burton's 1989 *Batman* live-action feature, *Batman: The Animated Series*' 85 episodes ran from 1992 to 1998 and had a huge impact on fandom, animation and the comic-book industry. In particular, Eric Radomski's deco-inspired designs for Gotham City, the iconic character designs by Bruce Timm, a writing team that included Paul Dini and a pitch-perfect voice cast directed by Andrea Romano all came together to create an instant and lasting classic that still resonates today in animation and comic books.

"There was a real sophistication and elegance to that series," says Jim Lee, co-publisher of DC Comics. "It certainly appealed to kids but had a depth that really made it fascinating and interesting to watch for adult fans. I think visually, it was stylistically stunning."

Even the voice acting of that show has had a huge influence and legacy more than 20 years after it debuted. "I've done panels with Kevin Conroy, who does the voice of Batman, and it's amazing how much the audiences connect to him," Lee says. "He's their Batman. He's directly plugged into their overall psyche and it's amazing to watch him work the crowd and bring Batman to life through his voice."

She's Quinn-tessential

Perhaps the most lasting contribution was the creation of the character Harley Quinn. An original character created as the Joker's assistant, the character became hugely popular among fans and since has been integrated into almost every version of the Batman mythos from comics to video games.

The influence on comics was significant, with the show's design sense and use of colors and costumes finding its way onto the printed page, says Lee.

DC Entertainment and Warner Bros. are celebrating the 75th anniversary of Batman with numerous events, in-

cluding Batman Day, set for July 23. As part of the festivities, fans who visit participating comic-book stores and book stores will receive a free, special edition of *Detective Comics* #27, featuring a reimagining of Batman's 1939 comic book debut, designed by Chip Kidd with a script by bestselling author Brad Meltzer.

In addition to the comic book, DC Entertainment is providing retailers access to an assortment of other collectibles to help in the celebration of Batman Day, including a Batman 75th anniversary cape, bookmarks featuring essential Batman graphic novels and four Batman masks designed by comic-book artist Ryan Sook spotlighting a variety of the character's iconic looks from his 75-year history.

There also was a 75th anniversary short animated film from Timm, pitting the Dark Knight against Hugo Strange in typically stylish fashion.

Batman's Secret Origins

The comic-book page is where Batman has lived the vast majority of his fictional life.

Created by a young artist named Bob Kane and writer Bill Finger, there was little about the first Batman story in *Detective Comics* #27, cover dated May 1939, that indicated the birth of an enduring cultural icon. Borrowing ideas from sources as diverse as the sketchbooks of Leonardo da Vinci and *Zorro*, Batman was but one of many costumed heroes that sprang up in the wake of Superman's success the year before.

But several key elements to the character helped him stand out, says Lee, one of the most popular superhero comic-book artists of the past quarter century. "He's a character that was created in tragic circumstances – and overcame them," he says. "That aspirational-inspirational aspect of Batman is something I think all people can relate to."

He also stood out because of the quality of work Kane, Finger and others put into the character and expanding the mythos with the likes of Robin, the first kid sidekick in comics; the Joker, arguably comics' greatest villain; Catwoman, a conflicted thief and on-again off-again romantic interest; the Penguin, Hugo Strange, Mr. Freeze, the Riddler, Two-Face, Poison Ivy, Bane, and on and on.



75 YEARS OF BATMAN

Lee says it was important that the character was allowed to evolve and adapt over the years. "We don't want our characters to become encased in amber, ossified as it were," says Lee. "It's important that Batman really reflects what's going on in society and that he feels very much of the here and now."

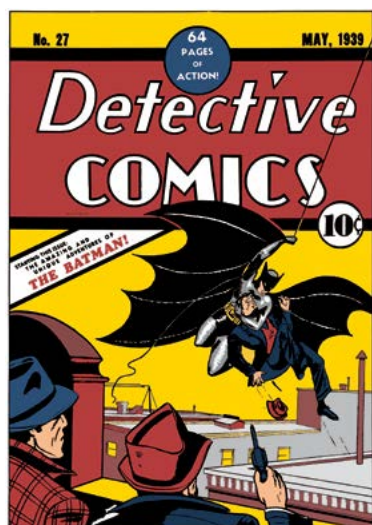
Big Screen Ambitions

The early tales from comics' golden age were simple, sometimes dark and often bizarre. But something about Batman clicked with the kids who made up the comics reading public. The character – again, following in the footsteps of Superman – appeared in a pair of Columbia Features serials: 1943's *Batman* and 1949's *Batman and Robin*. Neither was especially well received and the Caped Crusader would not return to the screen until the now-classic ABC series that ran from 1966-69.

That series blurred the lines between live-action and animation, both with its campy cartoon style of action, as well as an actual animated open credits sequence and the animated fight sound effects that



Batman: The Animated Series offered an elegant and definitive take on the character and contributed such popular elements as Harley Quinn. Below, Batman evolved in comics from his debut to *The Dark Knight Returns* and *All-Star Batman*.



Series, a veritable explosion of comic book titles, even more animated series, several animated DC Universe features, the acclaimed Christopher Nolan movie trilogy and, soon, a team-up with the Man of Steel in *Batman v. Superman: Dawn of Justice*.

Drawing Attention

Lee himself has contributed several key chapters in the Batman saga, drawing the acclaimed *Hush* storyline written by Jeph Loeb, and collaborating with Miller on the unfinished and controversial series *All-Star Batman* and *Robin the Boy Wonder*.

"Those were fun opportunities for me to work with writers I long respected,"

says Lee. "Generally, I like to work with writers I can learn something from. They both know the character so well and portray it differently but they know it so well and they really understand the mechanics of why this mythology works, that Batman works when he has great villains and foils to work off of."

Recent years have seen the character redefined yet again by writer Grant Morrison, whose talent for innovating within the confines of strict comic-book continuity is unparalleled in comics. "Grant is a writer that prides himself on looking at the entire history of the character, every storyline that preceded his and, in his mind, figures out a timeline and continuity where they can all exist and be canon," says Lee.

More recently, Scott Snyder has taken on the role of lead Batman writer in DC's relaunched universe, The New 52. "*The Court of Owls* was just really a nice change of pace," says Lee. "It had a very literary quality to it – probably more words on the page than one had seen in the past – but he really created a dense and vibrant take on Gotham City."

The Batman titles are, by far, DC's most popular, with two new titles – *Gotham Academy* and *Arkham Manor* – just announced for a fall debut, ensuring the Dark Knight will continue to protect the citizens of Gotham City – in any medium – for many more years to come. ♦

"We don't want our characters to become encased in amber, ossified as it were. It's important that Batman really reflects what's going on in society and that he feels very much of the here and now."

– Jim Lee, Co-publisher, DC Comics



defined the character – and comic-book characters in general – in the minds of the general public for more than two decades. The fad burned brightly and fizzled out just as quickly; the backlash from fans who took their comics and superheroes seriously lasted for years.

The Dark Knight's first proper animation outings were fairly underwhelming, starting in 1968 with Filmation's *The Batman/Superman Hour*, later re-packaged as *Batman with Robin the Boy Wonder*; and the juggernaut of 1970s and 1980s Saturday-morning TV, *Super Friends*.

A Modern Makeover

But the modern take on Batman perfected by *The Animated Series* first showed up in the comics in the early 1970s, as writer Denny O'Neil and artist Neal Adams put the dark back into the Dark Knight. Lee says it was their additions to the Batman mythos – notably the villain Ra's al Ghul and his daughter, Talia, a compelling romantic interest

for Batman – that made the character fresh and relevant again. "It just created an amazing story and one that was worthy of the lore and legend of Batman," says Lee.

That serious approach was further defined in an iconic late 1970s run in *Detective Comics* by writer Steve Englehart and artist Marshall Rogers that reinvigorated the Joker and had a big influence on the first Burton feature.

But if there's a tale that truly defined the modern Batman, it's Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns*. Published in 1986, the four-issue series about an aging Bruce Wayne who returns to the role of Batman at the hour of Gotham City's greatest crisis has been a perennial best seller for DC and a landmark in American comics.

Batman's success over the past 25 years speaks to the power of the character. After Burton's *Batman* redefined the definition of blockbuster for the movie business, there were sequels, *Batman: The Animated*

2014 Comic-Con Hit List

If looking at the events line-up for Comic-Con International in San Diego (July 24-27) is giving you palpitations, here's a minimalist approach to your Con experience:

WB Superheroes

Warner Bros. Television Group will once again have a massive presence at the show, including a first-ever, three-hour Saturday night WBTV/DC Entertainment event featuring the world premiere of **Gotham** (and its only CCI screening), *The Flash* pilot and footage from the highly anticipated *Constantine* and third season of *Arrow*. Other live-action fare on offer for screenings, panels and signings include comic properties *Arrow* and *ZOMBIE*.

Animation must-sees are a first look at **Mike Tyson Mysteries** (coming to Adult Swim this fall), a comedy that follows boxing legend Mike Tyson as he takes the fight from the ring to the streets ... by solving mysteries! The panel features Tyson, Rachel Ramras, Jim Rash and producer Hugh Davidson [Friday, 2:30, Indigo BR]. And don't miss a new episode screening and Q&A for Cartoon Network's **Teen Titans Go!** with producers Michael Jelenic, Aaron Horvath and voice cast stars. Plus, the Japanese pop duo responsible for the show's theme song Puffy AmiYumi will make a special appearance [Sunday, 11:45, Rm. 6BCF].



CN/AS/OMG

Cartoon Network will offer fans the ultimate smorgasbord of current, original animated series from the acclaimed channel. **Adventure Time**, **Regular Show**, **Steven Universe**, **Uncle Grandpa** and **Clarence** will all get star-studded



panels, signings, screenings and event-exclusive giveaways. Not to mention behind-the-scenes looks with new clip, panels and Q&As with series creators, producers and voice talent. And be

sure to make a beeline for their booth to pick up whatever awesome swag they're bringing this year.

Not for the faint of heart (or attenders of elementary school), **Adult Swim** is bringing lots of mature-audiences fun with its first-ever, very own booth as well as signings and panels for hit toons **Robot Chicken**, **The Venture Bros.**, **Rick and Morty** and **Mike Tyson Mysteries**, plus live-action fare *Childrens Hospital* and *Triumph the Insult Comic Dog*. The super fun **Adult Swim Fun House** returns with new rooms and activities. Plus, check out the brand-new **The Meatwad Full Dome Experience** next door – a 360-degree animation experience. The dome also will host private panels on Saturday for an intimate experience with creators and talent from **Superjail!**, **King Star King** and upcoming series **Mr. Pickles** (tickets available through Adult Swim).



Pitch to Nick

Nickelodeon is pulling another CCI first: the acclaimed kids' channel is bringing its **Animated Shorts Program** to the event, with an open call for original projects from attendees. Nick's animation development team will take live, in-person pitches from Thursday to Saturday at its convention floor booth to greenlight a project for the global program. The chosen pitch will be developed into a short with the potential to air on Nickelodeon, appear on nick.com or the Nick App – it may even follow other great ideas to become a long-format series, like the recently picked up *The Loud House* from first-time creator Chris Savino.



The Force Is with Disney

Disney TV is warming up their lightsaber-swinging arms for events centered on the new CG-animated Lucasfilm Animation series **Star Wars Rebels**, arriving on Disney XD and Disney Channel this fall with a one-hour



premiere special. The show is created by *X-Men: Days of Future Past* writer Simon Kinberg, who executive produces with Dave Filoni (*Avatar: The Last Airbender*, *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*). You may even get a

chance to check out the action-packed upcomer in the company of voice stars Freddie Prinze Jr., Taylor Gray, Tiya Sircar, Vanessa Marshall and Steve Blum during a panel on Thursday from 6-7.

And don't forget to tune in to Disney Channel from your hotel room Saturday night at 9 for the TV premiere of **Phineas and Ferb: Star Wars**, in which Dan Povenmire and Swampy Marsh's adventurous duo (plus platypus) encounter beloved characters from the Star Wars universe and do everything in their power to help the Rebel Alliance defeat the evil Darthenshmirtz. The episode will be simulcast on WATCH Disney Channel for verified users.

Toon into the Film Fest

The **Comic-Con Film Festival** has eclectic programming sessions going all through the event, but if you're after an animation-centric experience you should plan to pop in on Friday. The day kicks off at 10 a.m. with the second session of the Comic-Con Film School panel before screenings begin. Check out shorts from five to 30 minutes; *Arcane*, *JFH: Justice-For-Hire*, Bill Plympton's **Drunker Than a Skunk**, *Foxed!*, *Ed*, *Create*, *MITE*, *Origami* and *There's an Octopus in Your Head*. You can grab a quick lunch after the closing panel *The Chair: One Script, Two Visions, One Winner*.





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Comic-Book Movies Guide

Caped crusaders, tights-clad titans and wielders of weapons both martial and magical continue to rake in big bucks at the box office, encouraging the major studios to branch out to lesser-adapted properties and reboot tried and true ones. Here's what your fan friends will be having impassioned online debates about for the next few years:

2014

Guardians of the Galaxy

Disney | Aug. 1

Director: James Gunn

Writers: James Gunn, Nicole Perlman

Created by: Dan Abnett, Andy Lanning (Marvel)

Starring: Chris Pratt, Zoe Saldana, Dave Bautista, Vin Diesel, Bradley Cooper, Lee Pace, Michael Rooker, Karen Gillan, Djimon Hounsou, John C. Reilly, Glenn Close, Benicio del Toro, Josh Brolin



Story: When American pilot Peter Quill finds himself the object of a manhunt after stealing an orb coveted by the villainous Ronan, he must team up with a group of alien misfits to take a stand for the fate of the galaxy.

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles

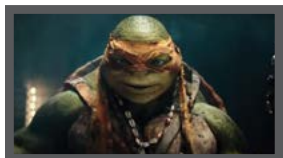
Paramount | Aug. 8

Director: Jonathan Liebesman

Writers: Josh Appelbaum, Andre Nemec, Evan Daugherty

Created by: Kevin Eastman, Peter Laird (Mirage)

Starring: Johnny Knoxville, Alan Ritchson, Noel Fisher, Jeremy Howard, Megan Fox, Tony Shalhoub, Will Arnett



Story: The latest reboot for the heroes in a half-shell sends them into the darkened streets of New

York to face off with Shredder and his evil Foot Clan with the help of fearless reporter April and her wise-cracking cameraman.

Sin City: A Dame to Kill For

Dimension Films | Aug. 22

Directors: Robert Rodriguez, Frank Miller

Writer: Frank Miller

Created by: Frank Miller (Dark Horse)

Starring: Jessica Alba, Powers Boothe, Josh Brolin, Rosario Dawson, Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Eva Green, Dennis Haysbert, Stacy Keach, Jaime King, Ray Liotta, Jeremy Piven, Mickey Rourke, Bruce Willis



Story: The long-awaited sequel will weave Miller's "A Dame to Kill For" and "Just Another Saturday Night" comic arcs with two original plots, subjecting Dwight, Ava, Marv, Nancy and the rest of the degenerate Sin City dwellers to violence, plots and bad behavior.

Kingsman: The Secret Service

Fox | Oct. 24

Director: Matthew Vaughn

Writers: Matthew Vaughn, Jane Goldman

Created by: Mark Millar, Dave Gibbons (Icon)

Starring: Colin Firth, Samuel L. Jackson, Mark Strong, Taron Egerton, Michael Caine

Story: Said to closely mirror the comic, the film centers on a veteran agent of a super-secret spy agency tasked with taking a recently recruited street kid under his wing in the agency's ultra-competitive training program, just as a global threat emerges from a twisted tech genius.



2015

Avengers: Age of Ultron

Disney | May 1

Director: Joss Whedon

Writer: Joss Whedon

Created by: Stan Lee, Jack Kirby (Marvel)

Starring: Robert Downey Jr., Chris Hemsworth, Mark Ruffalo, Chris Evans, Scarlett Johansson, Jeremy Renner, Samuel L. Jackson, Aaron Taylor-Johnson, Elizabeth Olsen, James Spader

Story: The

Avengers reassemble to face a high-tech threat: the AI known as Ultron

whose enormous god complex drives him to take over the Earth. The brother-sister team Scarlet Witch and Quicksilver also join the party this time out.



Fantastic Four

Fox | June 19

Director: Josh Trank

Writers: Simon Kinberg, Jeremy Slater

Created by: Stan Lee, Jack Kirby (Marvel)

Starring: Miles Teller, Kate Mara, Michael B. Jordan, Jamie Bell, Toby Kebbell, Reg E.



Cathey **Story:** At WonderCon, writer Kinberg said the reboot is meant as "a much more grounded, gritty, realistic movie."

Word on the interwebs is that the Doombots will be showing up.

Ant-Man

Disney | July 17, 2015

Director: Peyton Reed

Writers: Edgar Wright, Joe Cornish, Adam McKay

Created by: Stan Lee, Larry Lieber, Jack Kirby (Marvel)

Starring: Paul Rudd, Michael Douglas, Evangeline Lilly

Story: After more than a

decade in development, con-man Scott Lang will hit the silver screen to help his mentor Dr. Hank Pym safeguard the amazing mystery of the size-shrinking, strength-amping Ant-Man technology from various menaces.



Winter Soldier as Brock Rumlow) has said the Russos have hinted to him that the character, better known as the villain Crossbones, may play a larger role in the threequel.

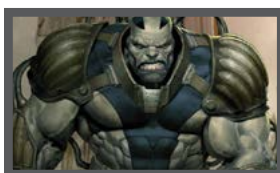


X-Men: Apocalypse

Fox | May 27, 2016

Director: Bryan Singer

Writers: Simon Kinberg, Dan Harris, Michael Dougherty



Created by:

Stan Lee, Jack Kirby (Marvel)

Starring: James McAvoy, Michael Fassbender,

Nicholas Hoult, Jennifer Lawrence, Evan Peters

Story: Singer has said *Apocalypse* will focus on the origin of the mutants and will be more like a *First Class* sequel. The film will take place in 1983 and introduce younger versions of Cyclops, Jean Grey and Storm.

The Amazing Spider-Man 3

Sony | June 10, 2016

Director: Marc Webb

Writers: Alex Kurtzman, Roberto Orci, Jeff Pinkner

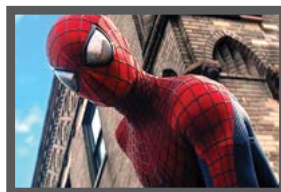
Created by: Stan Lee, Steve Ditko (Marvel)

Starring:

Andrew Garfield, Sarah Gadon

Story: Details of Peter Parker's latest foe to face-down in

Manhattan have yet to appear, and some industry watchers are wondering if one of the planned villain spin-offs (*Sinister Six* and *Venom*) might take over the date.



Writers: David James Kelly

Created by:

Roy Thomas, Len Wein, John Romita, Sr. (Marvel)

Starring: Hugh Jackman

Story: Mangold says the sequel will draw on popular comic-book stories; Kelly is a freshman writer best known for his original short *Straw Man* about an average joe who's actually a successful arms dealer.



Fantastic Four 2

Fox | July 14, 2017

2016

Batman v. Superman: Dawn of Justice

Warner Bros. | May 6, 2016

Director: Zack Snyder

Writer: Chris Terrio, story by David S. Goyer, Zack Snyder

Created by: Bob Kane, Jerry Siegel, Joe Shuster (DC Comics)

Starring: Ben Affleck, Henry Cavill, Jason Momoa, Gal Gadot, Amy Adams, Laurence Fishburne, Diane Lane, Jesse Eisenberg,



Jeremy Irons
Story: After facing the ultimate alien menace in *Man of Steel*, Snyder

was stumped as to who to introduce in a Superman sequel. Luckily for crossover fans, the writing team decided to bring the Dark Knight into the mix as a prelude to the *Justice League* franchise.

Captain America 3

Disney | May 6, 2016

Directors: Anthony Russo, Joe Russo

Writers: Christopher Markus, Stephen McFeely

Created by: Joe Simon, Jack Kirby (Marvel)

Starring: Chris Evans

Story: Frank Grillo (who was introduced in

2017

The Wolverine 2

Fox | March 3, 2017

Director: James Mangold

2018

The Amazing Spider-Man 4

Sony | May 4, 2018

Also on the Drawing Board...

What to expect, what to hope for, and what to watch slowly wither in development before quietly being set aside. (Hey, *Ant-Man* made it out!)

100 Bullets

Akira

Avengers 3 & 4

Black Panther

Black Widow

Blade

Bleach

Cowboy Bebop

Deadpool

Death Note

Doctor Strange

Dreadstar

Fables

Fathom

The Flash

Ghost in the Shell

Green Arrow

Green Lantern

Reboot

Hack/Slash

Iron Fist

Iron Man 4

iZombie

Justice League

Justice League

Dark

Kick-Ass 3

The Metal Men

Ms. Marvel

Preacher

Runaways

Sandman

The Sinister Six

Shazam!

Superior

Thor 3

Venom

We3

The Wolverine 3

Wonder Woman

X-Force

Y the Last Man



Little Stars, Big Voices

An all-star cast of the top voice talent in the industry comes together to bring a modern, comic spin to *Snow White's* diminutive pals for Disney Junior's *The 7D*. By Tom McLean.

After more than seven decades as icons among icons, Disney's original animated family – the seven dwarfs of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* fame, of course – are getting a long-overdue makeover.

The results will be on display for all to see when Disney Junior debuts July 7 the new animated comedy series *The 7D*, updating Doc, Bashful, Grumpy, Sneezy, Sleepy, Dopey and Happy with a new vision designed to bring them fully into the 21st century.

That's a tall job, requiring some top talent to pull it off, and Disney has assembled just that with a voice cast featuring some of the most vital actors working in the business today: Bill Farmer, Disney's longtime voice of Pluto, plays Doc; Maurice LaMarche as Grumpy; Kevin Michael Richardson as Happy; Stephen Stanton as Sleepy; Billy West as Bashful; Scott Menville as Sneezy; and Dee Bradley Baker as Dopey. Rounding out the cast are Leigh-Allyn Baker as Queen Delightful, Paul Rugg as Lord Starchbottom, Jess Harnell as Grim Gloom and newcomer Kelly Osbourne as Hildy Gloom.



The voice cast of *The 7D* assembled! From left: Scott Menville, who plays Sleepy; Maurice LaMarche, a.k.a Grumpy; executive producer Tom Ruegger; Kevin Michael Richardson, the voice of Happy; Billy West, voice of Bashful; voice director Kelly Ward; Bill Farmer, who plays Doc; Dee Bradley Baker, voice of Dopey; and Stephen Stanton, who plays Sleepy pose together in the recording studio.

Pulling all of this together is Tom Ruegger, whom Disney execs tapped in 2011 to run the show because they admired and wanted to in some ways recreate the madcap comedy energy of his work on 1990s Warner Bros. shows.

"I was asked to put my comic spin on it, thanks to my previous work on things like *Animaniacs* and *Pinky and the Brain*, so they wanted this comic irreverence added to this classic Disney property," he says.

Going in a New Direction

That sat well with Ruegger, who felt that, given a TV budget and the audience the studio was attempting to reach, it was better to go with a new look and style rather than be beholden in any way to the original Disney version. "We went in a completely different direction with the art, with the design of the characters, with their outfits, with their voices."

Tapping into his long experience in animation, Ruegger called on many familiar names to join the production. He hired many colleagues from his Warner Bros. days — writers including Sherri Stoner, Paul Rugg, Deanna Oliver and Randy Rogel, and directors such as Alfie Gimeno and Charlie Visser.

One voice in particular set the tone: Once Richardson was cast as Happy, Ruegger says they were able to build the voice cast around him.

Farmer, who voices Doc and has voiced some of the classic versions of the dwarfs over the years, says he mostly ignored what had gone before for the characters and sought out something new.

"When you devise a voice for a character, you first look at any previous material, and since this is a departure from the classic seven dwarfs, you don't necessarily want to do a voice match or copy. You want to give him



Veteran voice director Kelly Ward, above left, says directing a cast of veteran voice actors offers him more flexibility and creativity in the studio. Bill Farmer, the voice of Doc, above right, says it was best to ignore previous versions of the character as *The 7D* is presenting a new vision of the characters. Jess Harnell, below right, worked extensively with animation voice-over newcomer Kelly Osbourne to create their all-new characters: the married but very dim villains of the show, Grim and Hildy Gloom.

"God forbid if anything were to happen when [the actors] were all in one place, because the voice-over industry would be dealt a crippling blow."

— Kelly Ward, voice director

a new personality and new life," says Farmer, adding his path to the new voice started with the new Doc being the sole bespectacled dwarf this time out. "Glasses usually show intelligence. He's the inventor ... He's the professor, in a way. That's how I saw him ... So I kind of pinch the voice a little bit and get a little higher, and kind of made him a little scatter-brained, and before long this voice came out and it just seemed to stick."

Making Villains from Scratch

Harnell came on board with a brand-new character he had to figure out from scratch. With one of his other roles playing the nomi-

nal villain on Disney's *Sophia the First*, he has his own ideas on how to find the right tack for playing Disney villains.

"These are not villains in the classic sense of the word because they're not really evil, they're just sort of inept," he says. Grim Gloom, he says, takes that idea to a new level. "You know how they say, 'He's a few bricks shy of a load'? This guy doesn't have any bricks. No bricks. And he's married to this character named Hildy, who is Kelly Osbourne, and she's definitely the brains of the operation. But between me and you, she's not all that bright, either."

But deep down, there's more to Grim than being dim. "Grim is so awesome because he's totally stupid but he's got a really good heart. He's actually not a bad guy, he's just trying to keep up with his wife, which I guess a lot of us can relate to."



With Osbourne coming into the show as an animation voice-acting rookie, Harnell says he enjoyed working directly with her and helping her with encouragement and advice when needed. "We hit it off from the get-go and we've become good friends, and one of the really cool parts about working with her was watching her grow in this arena," he says. "We got to develop timing together, and I really think that Hildy and Grim are one of the funniest cartoon couples that have been around in a long time."

Juggling the Voices

Overseeing the actors is veteran voice director Kelly Ward, who says the level of experience and talent gives the show room to experiment in the booth and ensures lively performances. "God forbid if anything were to happen when they were all in one place because the voice-over industry would be dealt a crippling blow," says Ward with a laugh.

The rapid-fire comedic pace of the show made timing an essential quality, bringing to the fore the difficulty in having the cast performing together, which was done as frequently as possible.

"Usually, if there was a block of dialogue that included two or three or even four of the

"We're trying to make people laugh and if [the actors] have in them a funny line or a funnier way to say the line, we are excited to hear it

and we definitely do use plenty of that."

— Tom Ruegger, executive producer and showrunner



dwarfs, they would record that ensemble. And usually it's Doc and Grumpy and Bashful, and so I was working with Billy and Kevin and Maurice most of the time," says Farmer. "Other than that, I was doing it solo, which is generally, unfortunately, most of the time."

Ward says when actors were recorded separately, Ruegger would later come in and work his genius. "He goes in after and cleans things up and tweaks them to a clock speed that he's got going in his mind," Ward says.

"We're trying to make people laugh and if they have in them a funny line or a funnier way to say the line, we are excited to hear it and we definitely do use plenty of that," says Ruegger.

The studio and network's commitment to making a high-quality show in the madcap comedy style was key to deciding to make the show in traditional 2D animation instead of CGI. Ruegger says 2D is better suited to the show's style, which can veer off in sudden and unexpected ways and draws upon a very

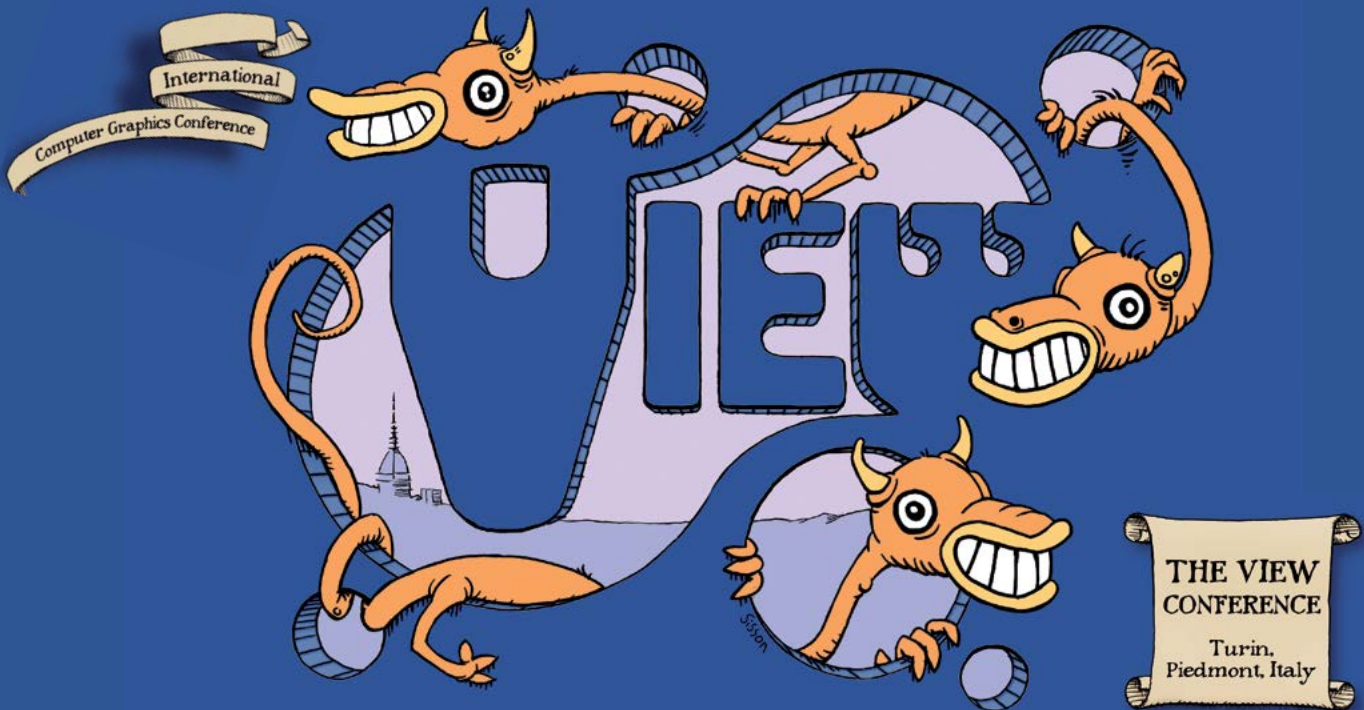
broad comedic sensibility.

And, of course, Ruegger says it's exciting to come and work on such an iconic property for Disney. "This is an honor, to be able to get near something that Walt cared about so much." ♦



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May the Ferb be With You

Creators Dan Povenmire and “Swampy” Marsh happily engage in corporate synergy and ship *Phineas and Ferb* off to a galaxy far, far away for a *Star Wars* special. By Tom McLean.

Oct. 30, 2012, will be a day long remembered by movie fans everywhere as the day Disney announced its deal to buy Lucasfilm and its iconic *Star Wars* franchise.

It was news that made a lot of jaws drop, but for others – like the creators and executive producers of Disney Channel’s hit animated comedy *Phineas and Ferb*, Dan Povenmire and Jeff “Swampy” Marsh – it was opportunity knocking.

“We were actually in a mix and the news broke that Disney had purchased Lucasfilm and our post-production manager sort of gasped and showed us on her Blackberry, and the very first thing I did was draw Doofenshmirtz as Darth Vader and take a picture of it and text that picture to Eric Coleman the head of (TV animation at Disney), and I just wrote under it ‘I smell crossover!’” says Povenmire. “He took his phone with that picture on it and brought it to a meeting with Bob Iger on a different subject entirely and then said, ‘Oh, by the way, Bob,’ and slid his phone across the desk and said, ‘Dan Povenmire sent me this.’ And Bob said, ‘Oh, yeah, we’ve gotta get right on that.’ I wasn’t in the meeting but that’s the apocryphal story that’s come out of it.”

Not being the first animated series to do a *Star Wars* special, Povenmire and Marsh opted to go a different route than having their

characters take on roles in the movie in *Phineas and Ferb Star Wars*, airing July 26 at 9 p.m. ET/PT on Disney Channel.

“We just got this idea kind of like the old Tom Stoppard play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, where we follow these two minor characters in Hamlet’s play while the play is going on and we thought that would kind of be a cool thing to do in this; leave the story of the first *Star Wars* movie exactly the way it was, the way we loved it, not mess with any of those characters and just build a story for our guys that kind of follows along beside that,” says Marsh.

Playing Around the Edges

The result is a special in which all the action takes place on the periphery of the story of *Star Wars*. In this version, Phineas and Ferb are happy campers growing up on Tatooine, a planet they love to death and never want to leave, and are friends with that mopey teen Luke Skywalker. Meanwhile, Perry the Platypus is revealed as the spy who stole the Death Star plans and delivered them to Princess Leia and Candace is happy as a low-level Stormtrooper looking to move up from such menial tasks as fetching Darth Vader’s socks.

The movie’s main characters interact with

the *Phineas and Ferb* characters – though always off-screen in a moment not seen in the film.

Casting those characters was one of the few limitations Povenmire and Marsh faced in making the shows as they were told not to approach the original cast.

“Those guys are busy right now shooting *Episode VII*, so we were not allowed to use any of them, including Mark Hamill, who we have on other shows and have had on our own shows before,” says Povenmire.

“We got somebody who does the best Harrison Ford impression that we’ve ever heard and we got him to come in and it was very weird to hear it. ... We’ve been having a harder time getting people to sound that much like the other characters but Han was an important one because he has a pivotal scene at the end so we’re getting as close as we can with everybody, especially when it’s dialogue from the movie where we want it to sound exactly like it.”

Sing it with Force!

Of course, this being *Phineas and Ferb*, there are songs. Povenmire says they typically come up with the story first and then figure out songs that would work with it. “This one was pretty easy,” he says. “You do a big Broadway



Phineas and Ferb Star Wars sees the happy duo and their friends play around on the outskirts of the story of *Episode IV: A New Hope*, interacting with characters from that movie and a few others, besides.



number about the 'Sith-inator' and Candace gets to sing why she's in the Empire because it's sort of strange that she's on the opposite side of the boys."

"And we decided Phineas and Ferb were the opposite of Luke Skywalker; they love Tatooine and never want to leave it, so their song is basically a love song to Tatooine," adds Marsh.

The pair had two guest songwriters working on the project: veteran animation writer and composer Randy Rogel and multitalented performer Wayne Brady, who helped write Candace's big ode to the Empire.

One thing that surprised the producers was how much interest there was in a *Star Wars* special, considering *Phineas and Ferb* is aimed at a young audience and first aired more than 30 years after *A New Hope* premiered.

"They almost all have seen that original movie; I think it's their parents. They say: 'Oh, you like *Clone Wars*? Well let me show you where that started.' So there's a lot of cross-over and we're very happy how just the news of it has been received," says Povenmire.

A Popular Secret Project

The project proved especially popular among crew members, with many of them just wanting to work on even the smallest part of a *Star Wars* project. "That was cool and exciting

but also a bit of a challenge," says Marsh. "There's also been more secrecy on this than anything else we've ever had, internally and all, making sure nobody put anything out there that wasn't supposed to be. It was like this is a whole new level of espionage and secrecy."

"We had a bullpen that we sort of closed off, our *Star Wars* bullpen, and all of the art and reference – we had *Star Wars* toys and everything in there – and we weren't allowed

ser blasts go by and stuff like that."

The Unthinkable Showdown

The special also finally offered Povenmire and Marsh a chance to do something that had not been done in the entire run of the show: Pit Phineas *against* Ferb.

"I couldn't imagine anything they'd disagree on to turn them against each other or

'We decided Phineas and Ferb were the opposite of Luke Skywalker; they love Tatooine and never want to leave it, so their song is basically a love song to Tatooine.'

– Jeff "Swampy" Marsh, co-creator and executive producer of Disney's *Phineas and Ferb*

to take anybody in there until it was actually announced because we didn't want it to get out," says Povenmire.

Animating the special required a lot of research to ensure events from the movie were accurately portrayed. "It's iconic things that we were recreating exactly the way they are," says Marsh.

"We had to screen grab those and put them into the animatic and then draw over them," says Povenmire. "When Luke and Leia swing by in the background, we want to make sure that that takes the same amount of time, and that they're in the right position and the right number of la-

even turn against anybody else – usually they're just such positive characters," says Povenmire.

"But shooting Ferb with the Sith-inator and making him evil gave us that opportunity to put them at opposite ends of something and actually have them fight, and I think there's a lot of real oomph in the fight scene."

With the special sticking mostly to the plot of *Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope*, the trilogy question is an obvious one to ask.

"I'm gonna ask as soon as this one airs," says Povenmire. "I would love to; we've had such a good time with this one." ♦

Animag's 13th Annual Pitch Party Results Are In!

One of the many amazing things about animation is the way in which it sparks the imagination. Once you turn on the faucet of ideas, it's almost impossible to stop the flow and even harder to contain your excitement when you hit on an idea you really like.

But turning those great ideas into shows is a difficult and often mysterious process, requiring constant honing of the pitch and the opportunity to put it front of the eyes of the people who have the power to make an idea for a show into reality.

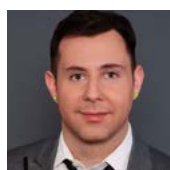
That's why we at *Animation Magazine* are proud to offer the 13th annual edition of our unique Pitch Party. The contest is an extremely targeted ad campaign designed to help indie

and up-and-coming artists present their ideas to a panel of industry professionals – as well as all the magazine's readers. As a bonus, this issue is being widely distributed at Comic-Con International: San Diego, giving our contestants a potentially huge audience for their pitches.

We are very happy to announce that this year's Top Prize winner is Shelby Christie for her pitch *Fuse*. As the winner, Shelby will get to pitch *Fuse* directly to the judge of her choice and receive a free digital subscription to *Animation Magazine*.

And while the Pitch Party may have wrapped for 2014, it's never too late to start honing your ideas for next year's edition. Who knows? Maybe your show will be transformed from an idea to reality.

Meet the Judges



Ted Biaselli

The Hub Network

Vice President, Programming

Ted Biaselli is responsible for guiding projects in all stages of development to air and through current production for the ever-growing Hub Network, home to

hit shows like *My Little Pony: Friendship Is Magic*. He has used his passion and industry experience to drive some of the network's most successful programs, such as *R.L. Stine's the Haunting Hour*, *The Aquabats! Super Show!*, *Transformers: Prime* and *Littlest Pet Shop*. Prior to joining Hub Network, Biaselli worked in animation development at Disney Channel, Playhouse Disney and Disney XD.

Top Picks: *Aero*, *Fuse*, *Jolly Space Raider*



Audrey Diehl

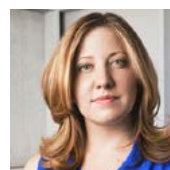
Nickelodeon

Vice President of Animation Development

As VP of Animation Development for Nickelodeon Group, Diehl provides creative guidance on development for the network's new animated shows, sources talent for key

creative positions and supervises both pre- and postproduction for animated pilots. She previously served as executive director of development, overseeing groundbreaking series like *Sanjay and Craig* and the production of a variety of upcoming shows. Diehl joined Nickelodeon in 2003 in current series, providing notes on the creative guidance of *My Life as a Teenage Robot*, *Catscratch*, *El Tigre* and *Fanboy & Chum Chum*.

Top Picks: *Deer Little Forest*, *Fuse*, *Jolly Space Raider*



Kate Lambert

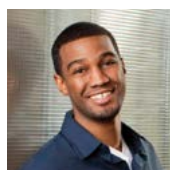
FX

Vice President of Original Programming, Comedy & Drama Development

Kate Lambert is best known for her great gift to mature-audiences animation in developing and overseeing the spy comedy *Archer* for FX, recently renewed for its sixth and seventh seasons. She has also been involved in developing pilots for the hit series *Sons of*

Anarchy, *Justified*, *The Americans*, *American Horror Story*, *Wilfred*, *The League* and *Louie*, to name a few. Most recently she is working on Guillermo del Toro's *The Strain* and the upcoming comedy series *Married*, starring Nat Faxon and Judy Greer.

Top Picks: *Aero*, *Fuse*, *Jolly Space Raider*



Walter J. Newman

Adult Swim

Director of Comedy Development

Walter Newman is responsible for developing and producing comedy live-action and animated series for Adult Swim from his HQ in Burbank, Calif. He

supervises original comedies for the network including *Loiter Squad*, *The Eric Andre Show*, *Tim & Eric's Bedtime Stories*, *Black Dynamite*, *China, IL* and original pilots. He also served as exec producer on the sketch series *Incredible Crew*, produced in association with Nick Cannon's NCredible Ent. Newman previously worked as a development executive at Comedy Central and in program development for VH1.

Top Picks: *Aero*, *InterWebz*, *Jolly Space Raider*



Linda Simensky

PBS

Vice President of Children's Programming

Since joining PBS's acclaimed programming division in 2003, Linda Simensky has used her talent and experience to collaborate with producers,

co-production partners, PBS station programmers and distributors throughout the development, production, post-production and broadcast phases for PBS KIDS series. Her efforts with shows like *Curious George*, *The Cat in the Hat Knows a Lot About That*, *Wild Kratts*, *WordGirl*, *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood* and *Peg + Cat* have helped transform the channel into the most trusted educational media brand for children. Simensky previously held the post of senior VP of original animation for Cartoon Network and enjoyed a nine-year stint building the animation department at Nickelodeon.

Top Picks: *Deer Little Forest*, *Fuse*, *InterWebz*

Our 2014 Pitch Party Winners

First Place: *Fuse*, by Shelby Christie



The judges' top pick this year is *Fuse*, a pitch from Canadian student Shelby Christie of Moncton, New Brunswick.

Christie, an animation student at New Brunswick Community College, says she always watched cartoons but developed a huge interest in art and animation watching her younger brother as he grew up. Her favorites included an early 1990s Canadian series called *The Legend of White Fang* and *Sailor Moon*. Her interest in art led her to major in animation and to come up with the idea for *Fuse*.

Her younger brother also inspired her pitch, about a boy named Elliott who lives about 100 or so years in the

future in a kind of junkyard with his aunt. He's skilled at building things but also a little scatterbrained.

This all plays out during a sort of planetary civil war between advocates of using technology to the max and those who prefer letting the Earth revert to a more natural state.

"I just really wanted to take this character who wasn't used to having a lot of responsibility and throwing him into a situation that would really test him," says Christie.

She gave Elliott two brothers to add some dynamics to the show.

As the winner of the Pitch Party Contest, Christie will have the chance to pitch her show directly to the judge of her choosing, as well as a digital subscription to *Animation Magazine*.



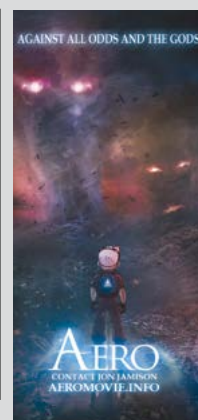
Second Place: *Aero*, by Jon Jamison



In the anime-influenced world of Jon Jamison's feature-film concept *Aero*, a boy goes on a journey to come to terms with the destruction of his family by a supernatural tornado, created by ancient gods. Along the way, he discovers new powers and faces a choice that will determine the fate of the world. The self-taught animator, who currently works as a visual-effects compositor, says he has loved animation from a very young

age and lists Hayao Miyazaki, Shinichiro Watanabe and Walt Disney among his heroes.

"I've watched anime my entire life and always wanted to watch an animated film that everyone can relate to," Jamison says. "Tragedy and triumph are things anyone can understand, and that is exactly what *Aero* represents." In five years, Jamison says he sees himself celebrating the success of *Aero* and moving forward on new films. "Animation is universal and can cross cultures and language barriers," he says. "I respect traditional animators greatly because it takes a lifetime of dedication to master the art."



Third Place: *Jolly Space Raider*, by Klas Jonsson



Our judges' third-place pick is the action-comedy *Jolly Space Raider* from Klas Jonsson, who runs a small company called Protoon.

Jonsson is originally from Sweden and has been working for more than 20 years as a visual-effects artist, postproduction supervisor, visual-effects supervisor and animator, mostly for television projects both in the United States and in Europe.

"*Jolly Space Raider* is a labor of love," says Jonsson. "It started as a hobby and grew from there."

The pitch centers around a teenage space pirate

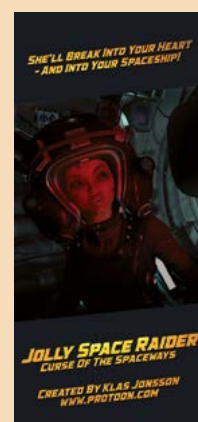
named Jolly. Set in a future where space travel is common, the story is set in the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter. When large ships run into trouble, the raiders are there to scavenge the wreckage.

"Jolly is one of them, and she's a small girl and very full of herself, and she's usually taking on people who are twice her size," says Jonsson. The tone is less hard science fiction and more of an action-comedy series.

The Jonsson says he's developed the pitch to be scalable to everything from a web series to a feature film and he's working mostly by himself on making a three- to five-minute episode as a pilot.

He does all of this between paying gigs and flying frequently back and forth from Los Angeles to Sweden – a long commute, he admits, but worth it.

"I don't mind," he says. "I work with stuff I absolutely love."



Animag Staff Picks

First Place: *Aero*

(Jon Jamison, Chicago)

Second Place: *Fuse*

(Shelby Christie, Moncton, Canada)

Third Place: *Sports Animation Universe*

(Lamont Mims, Chicago)



Online Readers Picks

First Place: *Zombie Sports*

(Brian "Rudy" Rudick, Sparks, Md.)

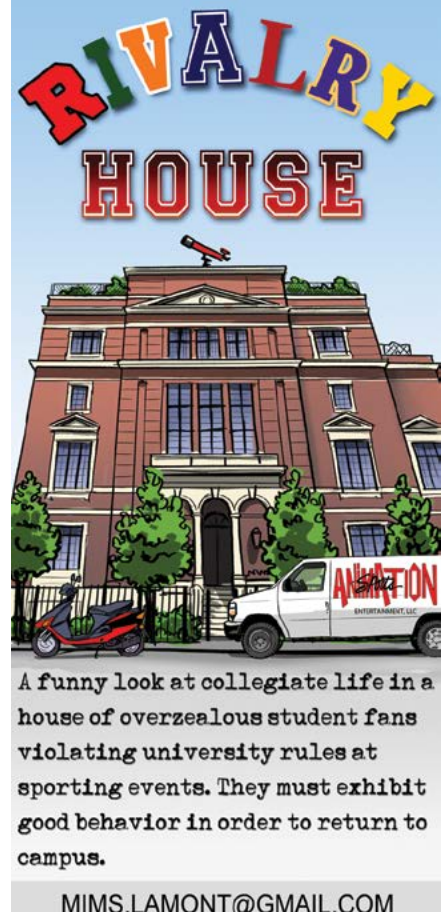
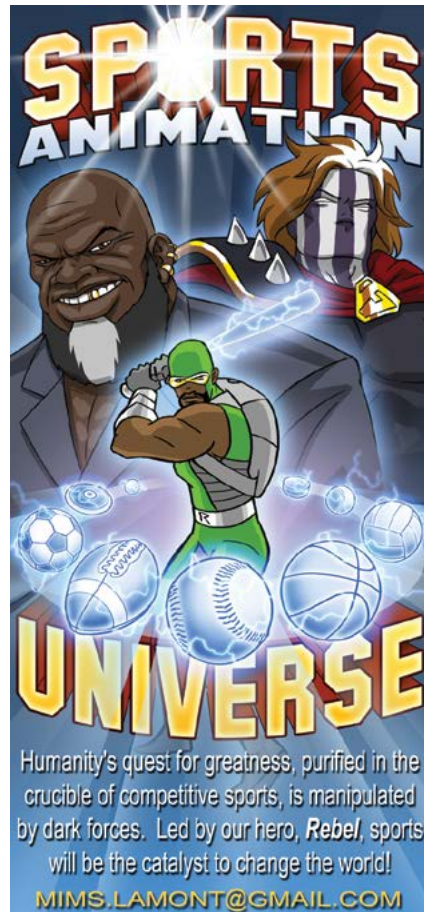
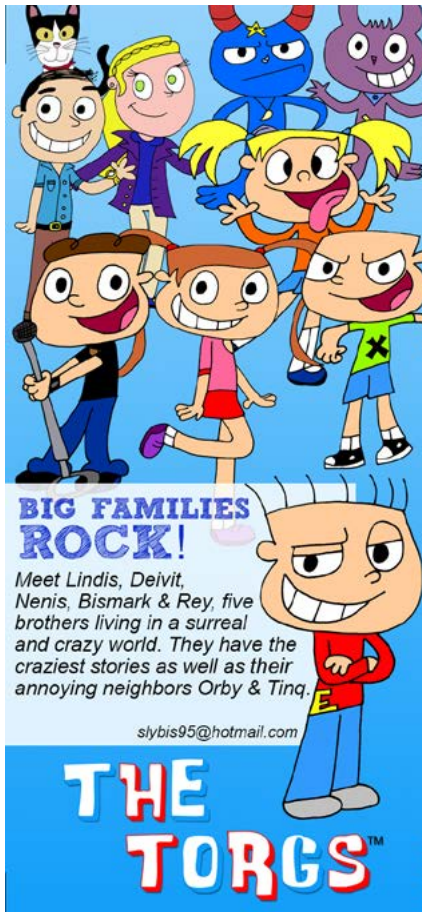
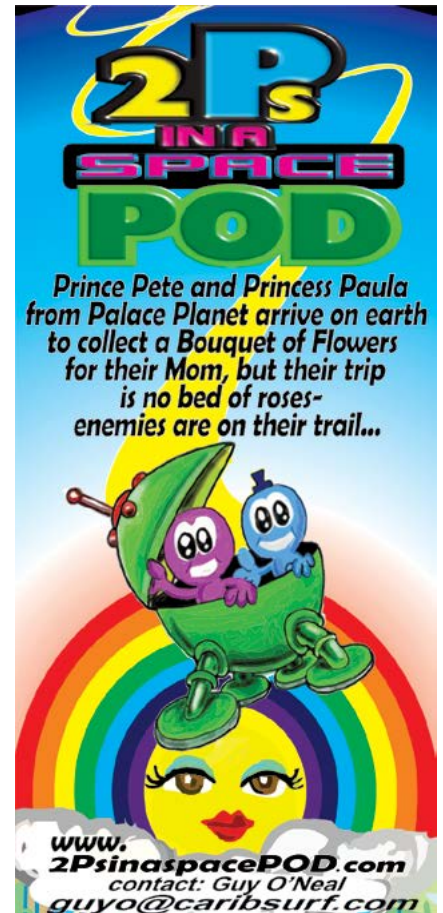
Second Place: *Deer Little Forest*

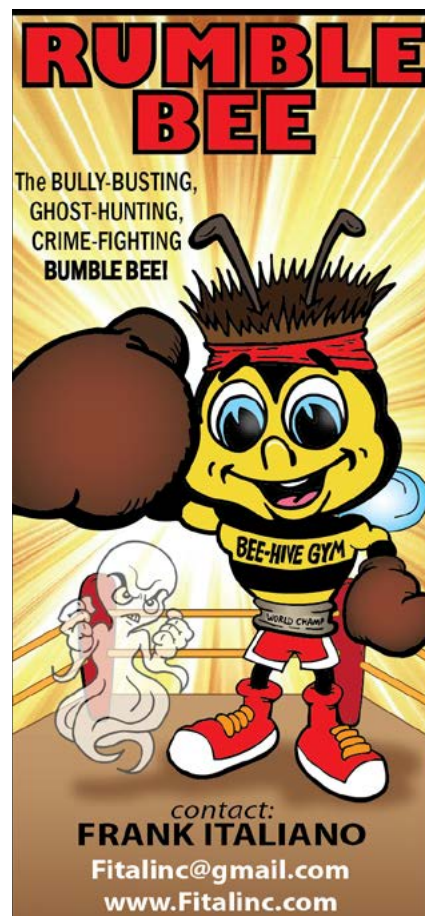
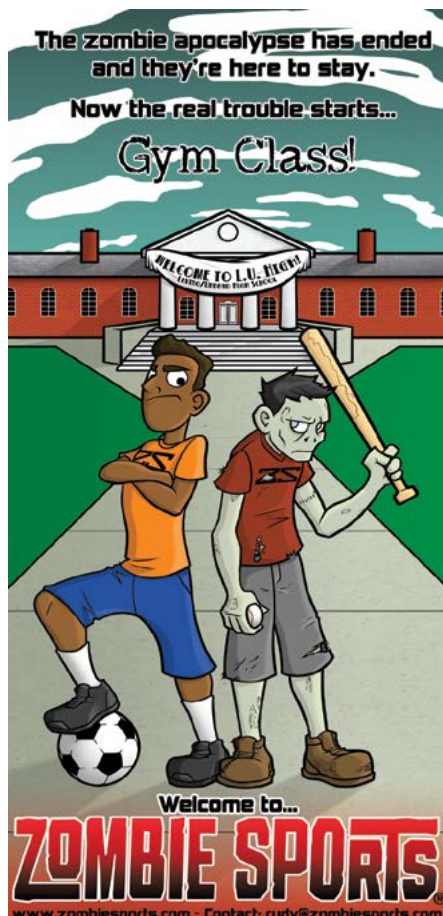
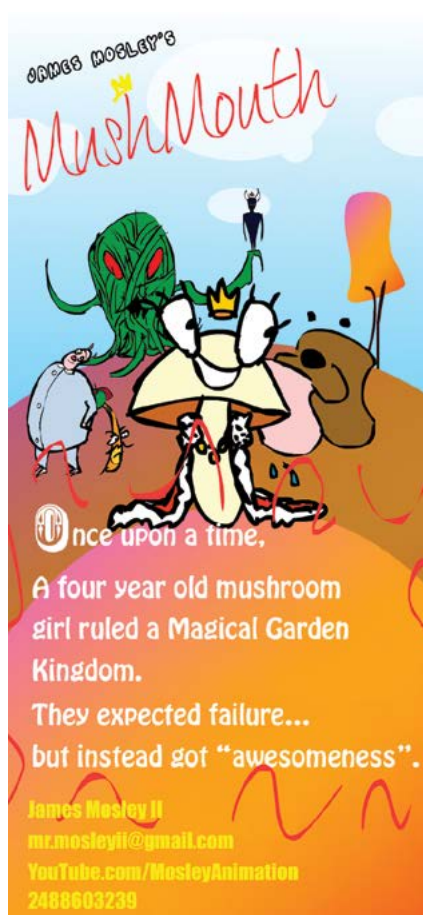
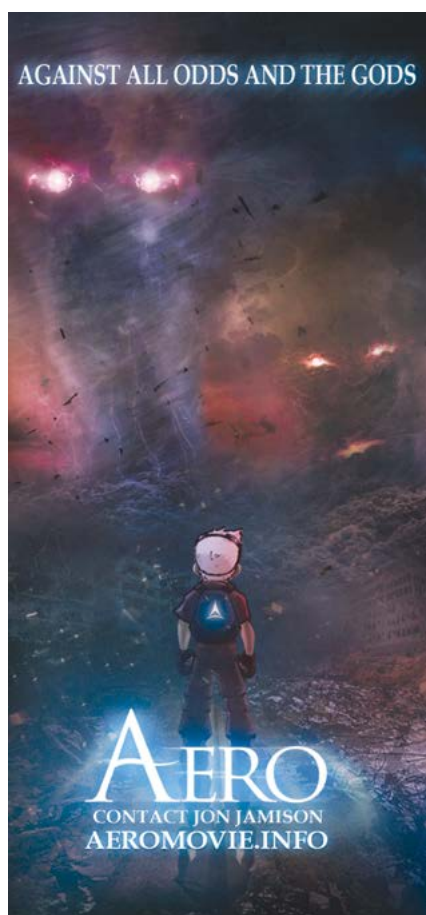
(Jo Rose, New Forest, United Kingdom)

Third Place: *The Torgs*

(Bismark Palma, Bogota, Colombia)

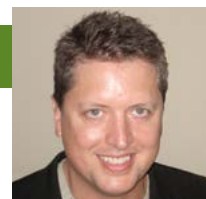






Autonomous Animator

By Martin Grebing



The Great Transition: From Employee to Entrepreneur

Getting to that dream job takes a lot of sacrifice and planning, but long-term gains are worth enduring some short-term drawbacks.

One day, a business owner called his star employee into his office. He pointed out his picture window to a sprawling skyline of mansions up in the hills. He said, "You know, if you do exactly what I tell you, work through the holidays, make personal sacrifices for your job, put in overtime when required, then some day there will be a house in those hills – with my name on it."

The switch from employee to entrepreneur is more about changing your mindset than your employment status. The days of taking cues from your supervisor and performing as a one-dimensional worker bee are over. You must commit to becoming the butcher, baker and candlestick maker all in one.

Goal Setting

There is only one guideline for setting goals: think big. No – much, much bigger than that. To paraphrase Michelangelo, the danger is not in aiming too high and falling short, but rather aiming too low and hitting your mark. You can shoot for the stars and hit the moon or you can shoot for the moon and risk not getting off the launching pad. Keep in mind

on this daily. Flood your mind and body with all the euphoric emotions that come along with your newfound paradise. Perform this ritual every day, several times a day. The more frequently and intensely you visualize your goals, the quicker they will become reality.

Sustenance

The key to a smooth transition from employee to entrepreneur is having industry and client contacts already established and savings to live



The switch from employee to entrepreneur is more about changing your mindset than your employment status. You must commit to becoming the butcher, baker and candlestick maker all in one.

your new business will probably not resemble your ultimate lifestyle picture right out of the gate, but it's crucial to keep this vision in your thoughts to maintain a crystal-clear goal.

At the risk of sounding metaphysical, you need to spend a great deal of time visualizing your new, perfect life. Write down every detail you can imagine. Find pictures that fit every aspect of your vision. Immerse yourself in this vision. Close your eyes, visualize and meditate

off of while you're developing your business.

If you have neither, a cold startup can be more challenging but is still doable. I strongly recommend refraining from borrowing money from banks or even relatives except as a last resort. Owning without owing is the goal. Even with little startup capital, you may be surprised at how far it can be stretched by using guerilla business and marketing tactics and solid SEO practices (more on this in future articles).

How many months could you maintain your current lifestyle without receiving another paycheck from your current job? It's a relatively simple equation but will require some exploration to take inventory of all your resources. How much do you have in savings? Will you receive severance? Do you have residual income? Do you have any other sources of cash flow or liquidity?

If your current quality of life costs \$5,000 per month and without working another day at your current job you can pool \$30,000 cash, that gives you about six months of cushion while you get your new venture up and running.

To help fund essential start-up costs (more on this soon), as a general rule you should be prepared to set aside one to two months' worth of reserved income. This amount will need to be subtracted from the above total, which will result in one or two months less of a cushion. Plug in your own numbers to see where you stand. If you don't have at least six months net worth of padding (12 months or more would be ideal), you will need to either come up with more cash or adjust your lifestyle accordingly to cover the necessary ramp-up time needed to start generating substantial income.

If you need to shift from a three-bedroom house to a two-bedroom apartment and trade in your BMW for a Kia, keep in mind this is only a temporary budget adjustment to ensure your future nirvana. With knowledge, perseverance and a crystal clear picture of your goals, this can happen relatively quickly.

Martin Grebing is an award-winning animation director and producer who has focused his career on smaller studios and alternative markets. Today, he provides creative consulting and is the owner-operator of Funnybone Animation, a boutique studio that produces animation for a wide range of clients and industries. He can be reached at www.funnyboneanimation.com.



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Ask a Baboon

by Mike de Seve

Baboon Animation's newest shining star, the accomplished Susan Kim, has written for more than three dozen children's TV series, including PBS's runaway hit *Peg+Cat*, Scholastic-Sprout's brand new *Astroblast!*, *Wonder Pets!*, *Arthur*, *Martha Speaks!*, *Handy Manny*, *Are You Afraid of the Dark?*, *Speed Racer* and *Pocoyo* to name a few. She has been nominated for an Emmy and Writers Guild Awards four times. Lisa Goldman caught up with her at the Baboon studio in New York for a tête-à-tête on writing.

Lisa Goldman: What are your some of your funniest – or toughest – moments being a writer in animation? As a story editor? In a writer's room?

Susan Kim: A tough (and universal) writer's moment: When you're new on a show, you bust your hump trying to write something fantastic, and the story editor goes through your script and says: "This is hilarious! But not quite our show. And I loved this! But too similar to something we already did. And this made me laugh out loud! But not something that character would say." Afterward, you're left with like two shredded pages and told, "keep up the great work."

Although come to think of it, I've probably done the same thing as a story editor ... hmm.

Goldman: How about the perks and challenges of being a writer working from home?

Kim: Major perk: Being able to wear the same T-shirt and stretched-out yoga pants for three days in a row if you want. Like your cat gives a shit? Theoretically, you could wallow in your own filth for three weeks if you wanted, although of course I am *très* chic and always beautifully groomed. (And the fact that you don't even know which statement is true gets back to my answer:

You can do whatever you want! Who's going to know?) Mostly, I find that there's no comparison to the depth of focus you have when you're at home ... assuming, of course, you don't have small children, an obsession with housecleaning or a noisy partner. I love being with people, but I find them way too distracting. In college, my friends stopped inviting me to the library because I'd always be bored out of

my skull, talking nonstop and getting evicted by the librarian.

Goldman: As a story editor, do you think about gender at all when you're hiring writers and trying to get the right mix for a show?

Kim: I do. It's not just gender, although, of course, that's important. In an ideal world, I'd love a blend of sexes, experience, race, straight

women writing in animation? Has it ever felt like any kind of "boys club" has impacted your career, or is that old news?

Kim: To be honest, I feel lucky in



Susan Kim



that much of my work has been for preschool, which is – I freely admit – a girl ghetto. Okay, it's not exactly swarming with women, but most shows have at least a few female writers. It certainly doesn't have the boys club feel as other places I've worked, e.g. middle grade, adventure or Cartoon Network stuff.

Goldman: Any advice for aspiring animation writers?

Kim: Keep it visual. If your script reads like live action, something's wrong. Be nice and professional – it's a business of contacts, after all. And if no one's hiring you, screw them. Find an animator, produce your own stuff and put it online.

Baboon Animation is a U.S.-based collective of Oscar-nominated, multiple-Emmy-winning animation writers with credits on dozens of

the most iconic animated shows of the last two decades.

Lisa Goldman heads up the Women In Animation in New York. She also writes and creates content for all media platforms and teaches a course called Pitch Bible Studies Class. Learn more at <http://animateddevelopment.blogspot.com/>

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A Whole New Dawn

Director Matt Reeves talks about putting the focus on Andy Serkis' hybrid mocap-animated rebel leader Caesar for *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes*. By Bill Desowitz

When Matt Reeves was approached to succeed Rupert Wyatt as director of *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes*, it was the perfect match: he was an *Apes* fan from childhood and responded passionately to the successful *Rise of the Planet of the Apes*. However, Fox nearly lost Reeves when he saw the early direction of the sequel: a quasi *Battle for the Planet of the Apes*. He wanted to pull back and explore more of the transitional story of this simian reboot and focus on the apes' leader Caesar, played again by Andy Serkis.

Woods and see the civilization that they created and pick up where they left off, but after the viral apocalypse that knocked out the human race.

"What I loved in *Rise* was watching Caesar come toward articulation. But a weird thing happened for me in between the first time I watched *Rise* and the second time: I became a first-time father. And when watching *Rise* again, I had a new view of the movie, which was that Caesar reminded me of my son. I looked at him and I could see that there was tremendous comprehension of everything that he was

of the humans *and* apes. We know where it goes, but how did it happen? We also know the deep connection that Caesar has with human beings. So he's torn. I also thought that the story in *Rise* was so compact and propulsive from his character's point of view. He becomes this revolutionary, but what was it like to create this civilization and to have larger responsibilities? I kept thinking of it like *The Godfather* with apes. He was a leader but he was also a father. Suddenly, the decisions are not so easy because the stakes are so much higher. Whether or not the humans and apes can co-exist becomes the story and we live on the knife's edge."

"What they're doing is essentially interpreting a performance, which is complete artistry.

There is no Caesar without Andy and there is no Caesar without Weta."

— Matt Reeves, Director, *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes*

To Reeves's amazement, Fox was willing to change course. "I wanted to do something that was totally Caesar-centric," says Reeves, who previously directed the monster movie *Cloverfield*. "And I wanted to go up into the Muir

seeing and the frustration he felt was not being able to speak yet. I didn't want to lose that sense of coming into being for Caesar.

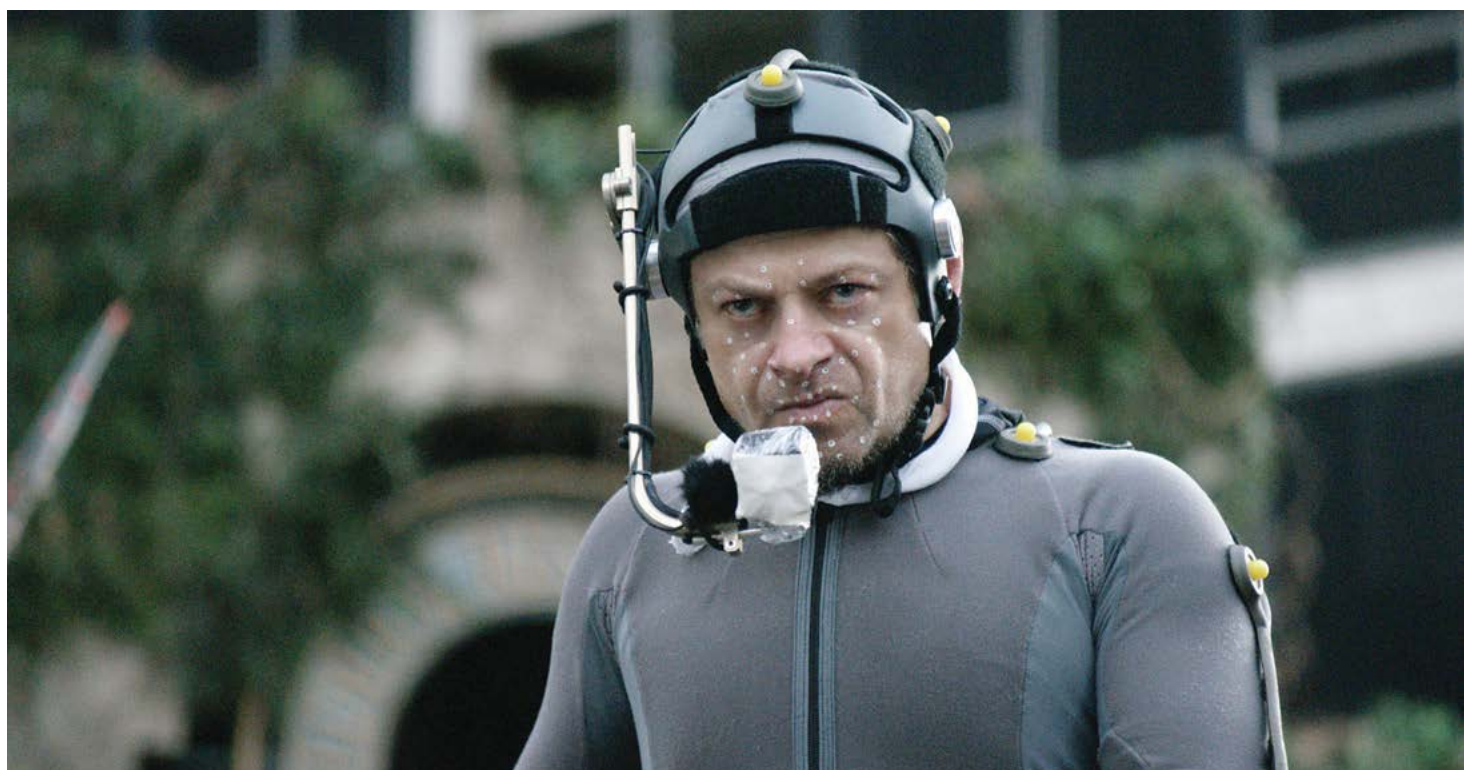
"Not only that, but I wanted to explore that moment when it could have been planet



A Naturalistic Approach

However, Reeves had a more naturalistic aesthetic in mind for *Dawn*, which hit theaters July 11 from Fox. Aside from the fantastical conceit of intelligent apes, he wanted it to appear very realistic. But in order to push the photo-reality, Weta Digital had to make certain adjustments to its performance capture methodology.

"My pitch to Fox was: What if we were to



do a whole movie on location in real lighting? It turns out that Weta had been thinking about that methodology as well and believed the apes could hold up to that photo-real standard," Reeves says.

The director recalls a "crazy" lab shot in *Rise* that featured top fluorescent lighting. He was impressed with how well the models held up in that realistic environment, and was very encouraged going into *Dawn* about achieving even greater detail.

Getting the Subtlety

Naturally, he was also blown away by Serkis' performance as Caesar, and wanted to see everything that Serkis did on set with the markers on his face side by side with Caesar to analyze the performance. It persuaded Reeves that they could improve the subtle details in the face and push a sense of vulnerability that was only hinted at in *Rise*.

"We spend a lot of time on animation and you don't see a render for a long, long time," Reeves says. "And so when I see the animation, I want to know if his eyes are as angry as Andy's. But at the same time, he's also sad and that comes from the redness on his lips, and we won't see that until the render. So we sit there chasing the shapes that we see, but the detail that you would see in his eyes when the render comes through was incredible.

"Despite the fact that there are all of these anatomical differences, the details that they have chosen are so specific to Andy and to Toby

Director Matt Reeves says Andy Serkis' performance as Caesar was a collaboration between the actor using mo-cap technology and the animators of Weta Digital.



Kebbell (who plays Koba), that I can't see anything other than those two actors. But here's the thing: the animation would matter a lot less if what we

were trying to do was recreate Andy as Andy. And then they could just use the motion capture and whatever flaws there are in the technology would be the limits. But what they're doing is essentially interpreting a performance, which is complete artistry. There is no Caesar without Andy and there is no Caesar without Weta.

"And I think there's confusion on both sides. There are people that don't understand how great an actor Andy is, and there are other people on the other side who have no idea

what amazing animators the people at Weta are. They never stop pushing. It takes so many levels of translation and performance and commitment to achieve such realism."

Bill Desowitz is owner of Immersed in Movies (www.billdesowitz.com), author of *James Bond Unmasked* (www.jamesbondunmasked.com) and a regular contributor to Thompson on Hollywood and Animation Scoop at Indiewire.

Evolving FX Define Extinction

ILM'S *Transformers* crew sticks with and grows along with the enormous franchise to explore new territory in both animation and visual effects in series' fourth installment.

By Ellen Wolff.

In the beginning, they were just cool cars that transformed into robots – twisted into Ginsu-knife origami by the CG artists at Industrial Light and Magic. But that was back in 2007, when *Transformers* first unveiled director Michael Bay's photorealistic take on the toons from Hasbro's toyland. Now, the fourth installment in Bay's behemoth franchise for Paramount barrels into a place where *anything* can transform, and fire-breathing Dinobots threaten the world.

Transformers: Age of Extinction continues Bay's collaboration with ILM – particularly with Oscar-winning visual-effects supervisor Scott Farrar (a two-time Oscar nominee for the *Transformers* films). As Farrar explains: "This is the beginning of a new trilogy. The biggest enemy that humans and Transformers face isn't war; it's extinction. And part of the extinction process may be coming from man-made characters."

An Expanding Cast

That storyline opened the door for a raft of new animated performers – along with the nasty Dinobots are good Autobots like Hound (voiced by John Goodman), Drift (Ken Watanabe) and Crosshairs (John DiMaggio). Perennial bot-heroes Optimus Prime, Ratchet and Bumblebee are back in action, too, and there are new twists in several transformations. "For the first time in this movie," says animation director Scott Benza, "we've got a triple-changer – a robot that's a Bugatti warrior, which also transforms into a helicopter."



Rick O'Connor

Scott Farrar

Scott Benza

Charles Alleneck

Like Farrar, Benza and co-animation director Rick O'Connor have worked on all four *Transformers* films, so they're used to being challenged to do something new. As O'Connor recalls: "Almost two years ago, when Bay Films was pitching this story, I thought it would be hard to transform into a dinosaur if you're a robot in disguise. I wasn't sure how we were going to incorporate that."

ILM's collaboration with Bay's production artists begins early in previz, sometimes before casting is complete. "Maybe a third of the artwork is done by the time we join the production," says Benza. "We'll take some initial designs and contribute ideas as to how characters could change to be more animation-centric. If a scene calls for it, we have the opportunity to introduce either new characters or new story beats."

"Every artist on our staff has come up with something that's ended up on screen," says

O'Connor. "Casting John Goodman as the voice of Hound was suggested by one of our animation coordinators."

Bay's Baptism of Fire

This give-and-take is especially fruitful when you consider that Michael Bay's background – directing films like *Pearl Harbor* and *Armageddon* – hasn't involved virtual actors. "Michael had never really done a film with animated characters *per se*," says Farrar. "Suddenly, not unlike any other animated film, he's doing a movie where you have to worry about voice casting, and be concerned with personalities."

"We spent a lot of time discussing who these characters were," says Benza.

"The inspiration for character traits for Bumblebee since the first *Transformers* was Michael J. Fox in *Back to the Future*, where he

ILM crew members who have been working on *Transformers* since the first film have helped evolve the series' visual effects to new heights for *Transformers: Age of Extinction*.



was a little bit out of his element. And we've carried that all the way through."

It helps that Benza and O'Connor have had notable continuity on their 72-person animation team. Charles Alleneck, who has risen to lead animator over the course of the four *Transformers*, says, "The animators here are all classically trained as character animators. So it's nice to get to flex those muscles. In this film, the robots are more center stage so we're getting to do more specific character animation. They have more recognizable faces and expressions and so we try to make them more emotive. And, more than any of the previous *Transformers* films, there are lots of scenes of robots interacting with robots. It is essentially an animated film for those parts."

"The line between visual-effects animation and animated films is really fuzzy these days," says Alleneck. "A lot of these animated sequences are meant to marry with live action. Part of being in the visual-effects business is treading that fine line."

Combining CG within live-action environments is a particular specialty of Farrar's, who has a cinematography background. He and Bay typically shoot real locations with wildly

moving cameras – and that remains true even though the franchise has expanded into IMAX 3D. "We have new styles of photography," says Farrar. "Even in IMAX." It's then up to ILM to figure out how to fit the CG characters and actors into those shots. (HDRIs, photogrammetry and match moving were key techniques that enabled this approach.)

Animating to the Action

"Unlike a lot of other films, we use very little pre-determined motion-based items," says Farrar. "We might put actors on cranes or wire assemblies where they can basically be puppeteered. I don't like the machine-driven stuff so much. You can preprogram a move based on animation that you've created and you put it on a motion base rig and the actors get on and go for a ride. Or you move them around and you retrofit your animation to that. That's what we do, by and large, because I think it looks more natural."

Transformers: Age of Extinction did find Bay for the first time filming an ILM animator in a mocap suit while viewing a rough Optimus Prime character through his viewfinder. O'Connor recalls: "Michael enjoyed it, but he



said, 'You guys just blew the dream – now I'll never be able to look at Optimus Prime thinking he's a warrior. I'll know he's an animator!'"

Ride On, Optimus!

Audiences of the latest film will see Optimus do something completely new: gallop astride a T-Rex-styled Dinobot. "It's like John Wayne riding to rescue the stagecoach," Farrar says with a laugh. "As if we had a camera truck following Optimus Prime on the dinosaur down the streets of Hong Kong to save the day."

Despite all of ILM's advances on the new *Transformers*, one process hasn't changed: the signature shape shifting of the robots. "Every transformation is hand-crafted," says Alleneck. "We don't want them to feel procedural. We wanted each transformation to fit the character and also the scene and the camera angle. Each one is a labor intensive process that has an artistry to it."

Farrar's final tally is that his 500-person crew hit a milestone with *Transformers: Age of Extinction*. "Over half the movie is made up of our shots. I think this is the largest data push-through in the history of ILM." ♦

Tech Reviews

by Todd Sheridan Perry



Adobe Creative Cloud 2014

There is a point in software development where a company must pivot on what they are focusing on.

With Adobe's Creative Cloud suite, I believe that while they are adding additional features into the toolset, they are turning more toward refining how the tools work *together*.

They've already begun to establish this connectivity, but with the latest versions, these connections are becoming more robust, with Premiere Pro being the center hub for the other production-centric CC products.

And before all the composers, sound designers, and colorists get bent out of shape, you all must concede to the fact that editorial is the driving core of the production. It just is. All post-production decisions are determined (and changed) because of the cut. So I think Adobe has made the right choice.

The most intriguing, and perhaps most innovative, features are between Premiere Pro and After Effects. Frequently in broadcast work, there is a lot of information embedded into design work – like for lower thirds. Often that requires going back to the compositor, changing the data, re-rendering and letting the editor know it's done. Lots of points of failure in that path.

Now, the After Effects artist can flag text in the comp so that the editor can access and change it from within Premiere Pro, boiled down to just those items he needs to worry about. Used correctly, I think this can be a total time-saver.

Editors also can create masks in Premiere Pro – and track them – without having to request it from the compositor. That data is easily ported back to After Effects for more refined work.

And speaking of masks, the new flexible masking tools allow you to mask effects. No more making additional layers or adjustment

layers and masking those. Just make a mask and apply it to that color grade. I've only been waiting 20 years for this feature. Game-changer. Tip to AE artists: Learn this. Just ask Nuke guys how important this feature is.

After Effects has a new keying power pack with a preset of Keylight, Key Cleaner and Advance Spill Suppressor, designed specifically with troubling greenscreens in mind – especially with motion blur, transparency and spill.

Speed Grade and Premiere Pro are even friendlier than before, sharing the Lumetri color grades, and now those grades and effects can be applied to entire clips through the Master Clip, affecting all the instances of a clip throughout the cut without having to apply the effect to each. And these changes propagate back and forth between Speed Grade and Premiere Pro.

Prelude, Story, Audition and Media Encoder received a few minor upgrades aiding in the overall workflow, especially with controlling and tracking metadata, but the big changes are listed above. And some of them are, indeed, big changes within deceptively small tweaks.

Stoke MX 2.0

Thinkbox always has the coolest tools. Honestly. They are smart, create fantastic imagery and cater to the small niche of smart VFX guys who make that fantastic looking stuff.

Stoke was released last year as a tool to quickly manipulate advections and forces to drive the motion of particles, which are then frequently rendered in the sibling Thinkbox software Krakatoa or meshed in Frost.

There is additional emphasis placed on the controllability of these fields. The fields could be derived internally or from other Max particle systems like Particle Flow, Thinking Particles or FumeFX. Some external systems like Realflow BIN files are supported.

That was Stoke MX 1.0. Stoke MX 2.0 is

not your dad's Stoke.

Stoke MX 2.0 grew exponentially in scope and functionality and has enveloped two other Thinkbox products – Genome and Ember – combining node-based Magma from both, as well as Krakatoa, to create an extremely robust and procedural system for driving hierarchically independent fields and hierarchically dependent field simulations. The approach feels much more like Houdini than it does 3ds Max.

And this is not the only expansion. Through Genome, Stoke can drive fields through and from mesh data, and the field access has been expanded to include the 3ds Max physics systems mCloth and MassFX.

And Stoke fields are not only driven by other sources, but additional particles can be generated, inheriting the data from the original source particles or mesh – including velocity, color, ID – with the option of manipulation with Magma.

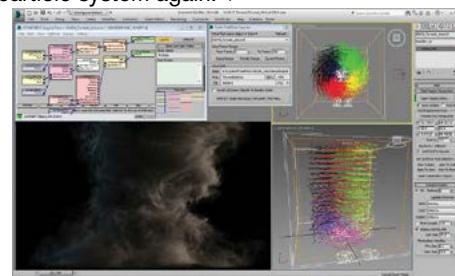
The resulting data can not only be sent to Krakatoa for rendering, but any other renderer that supports atmospherics (Scanline, V-Ray, FinalRender) can also handle it through the Stoke Atmospheric Effect.

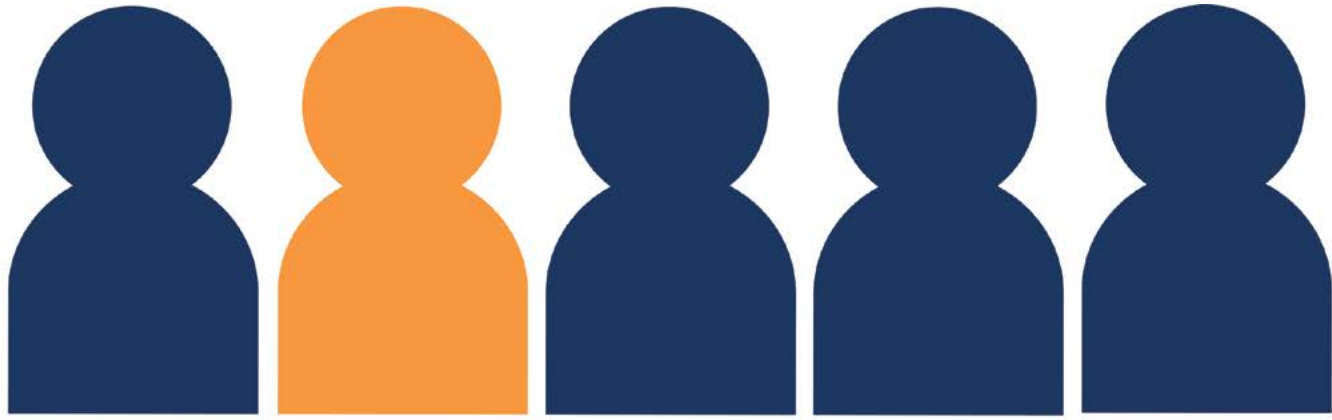
The data isn't limited to 3ds Max either. It can be exported back out to DreamWorks' opensource VDB format, or Imageworks' F3D for volumetric rendering.

Further functions include fast disk caching for particles, scripting support and plenty of tools for viewing particles and field data.

If all this sounds like a bunch of gloop-gorp, it probably indicates that brains more powerful than us are creating things that we don't even know we need yet.

It took me a while to wrap my head around what Stoke is doing, but now that I'm down that rabbit hole, I may never create a simple particle system again. ♦





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Anime Reviews

Persona 4: The Animation – Complete Collection

Aniplex/Sentai: \$79.98, Blu-ray (4 discs)

Persona 4 is a welcome rarity: An animated series based on a computer game that people who've never played the game can enjoy. When his parents go abroad for work, Yu Narukami is sent from Tokyo to live with his uncle and niece in the flyspeck town of Inaba. He expects he's in for a boring year at Yasogami High, but a mysterious killer starts leaving bodies sprawled on old TV antennas around town. As he befriends klutzy Yosuke, bossy Chie, shy Yukiko and tough guy Kanji, Yu learns about the eerie "midnight channel." On rainy nights, bizarre images appear on television at the stroke of midnight. Yu also learns that he and his new friends can pass through TV screens into an alternate world that's somehow linked to the midnight channel – and the murders. But when they enter the world, each teenager has to face the embodiment of the aspect of his personality he most dislikes. Yukiko, who works diligently at her family's traditional inn, longs for a freedom she also fears. Kanji, who beat the sushi out of a local gang of biker toughs, fears being mocked because he likes "cute little shit," including the animal charms he sews.



When they acknowledge the flaws as part of themselves, the characters receive magical cards that summon their Personas, supernatural alter-egos who can slay the resident demons. With the special powers that come with being the "Wild Card," Yu becomes the leader of the group.

The story rambles at times, and the plot about solving the eerie murder falls by the wayside in the second half of the show. Yu and his friends become a gang of fairly ordinary teen-agers, attending the inevitable school festivals and class trips. Romantic crushes lead to slapstick comedy. Teddie, a melodramatic (and sometimes annoying) little bear who guides the friends through the alternate world, assumes human form in the real one—and pursues both Yukiko and Kanji. Some of the writing is very clever, especially the way the two linked "Stormy Summer Vacation" episodes play off each other. The designs for the Persona creatures have an off-beat flamboyance that contrasts nicely with urban grit of the alternate world settings.

The two elaborate final battles may tie into the ongoing series of Playstation games, but they feel unnecessary and over-the-top. Yu and his friends are an engaging group – even without special effects.

Appleseed Alpha

Sony: \$30.99, Blu-ray

Anyone who doubts the existence of the Uncanny Valley phenomenon should take a look at *Appleseed Alpha*: the creepy motion capture humans in the film make the cast of *Polar Express* look downright vibrant.

Alpha is the latest adaptation of the Appleseed manga by Masamune Shirow, the creator of *Ghost in the Shell*. Shirow's original adventure was primarily set in Olympus, a model city built for the survivors of World War III in the 22nd century. In this prequel, the two main characters, tough-as-press-on-nails Deunan (voice by Luci Christian) and cyborg "bioroid" Briareos (David Matranga), who was once her boyfriend, wander dystopic ruins searching for Olympus, although they're not sure it really exists.

Two Horns (Wendel Calvert), the warlord of a ruined city hires them to eliminate some nasty bipedal drones from one end of town. During the fight, they encounter Iris (Brina Palencia) and Olson (Adam Gibbs). Iris is apparently human, although she's so under-animated she seems to have escaped from a department store window; Olson's a more human-looking cyborg. They're On A Mission. Deunan and Briareos bond with the newcomers while blowing up things and decide to join their mission.

Iris is charged with preventing the evil cyborg Talos (Josh Sheltz) from capturing a secret, super weapon humans were building at end of the war. But Talos finds them and uses Iris to activate the gigantic in-

sect-like war machine. The original engineers didn't quite finish the job, so there's the equivalent of a thermal exhaust port that gives Deunan and Briareos the entrance they need to blow it to smithereens.

The audience never really learns who Deunan and Briareos are. There's no time for character arcs, as they're too busy firing guns and throwing grenades in an attempt to energize the lethargic film. Although Two Horns has a mechanical face that suggests a Noh demon mask, Calvert's over-the-top voice suggests a hip-hop crime boss. If the vocal performances are unconvincing, there's only so much the cast can do with Marianne Krawczyk's leaden screenplay that runs to such clichés as, "He died for something he believed in."



Despite all the explosions, shoot-outs and martial arts moves, director Shinji Aramaki fails to infuse story with much excitement. Even when the doomsday weapon emerges from its underground bunker, there's no sense of urgency. Everything plods along as predictably as a paint-by-number.

Appleseed has already been animated several times. The original adaptation was released in 1988, the same year as Katsuhiro Otomo's watershed *Akira*. But *Akira* pointed the way to much of the future of anime; *Appleseed* largely summarized its past. John Woo produced the more elaborate, stylish and violent second feature *Appleseed Ex Machina* (2004).

The broadcast series *Appleseed XIII* (2011) was recut and released as two features subtitled *Tartaros* and *Ouranos*. *Appleseed Alpha's* release is tied to a line of action figures and the soundtrack album. ♦

– Charles Solomon

Summer Toon School Study Guide

The **LEGO Movie** assembles along with **Boondocks**, **Aaahh!!! Real Monsters** and **Regular Show** sets. By Mercedes Milligan.

The LEGO Movie

[Warner, \$28.98]

Phil Lord and Chris Miller's animated bricktacular was a hit with both audiences and critics this year, and now you can take home Emmet (Chris Pratt), Wyldstyle (Elizabeth Banks), Batman (Will Arnett), Metal Beard (Nick Offerman), Unikitty (Alison Brie), Benny (Charlie Day), Vitruvius (Morgan Freeman) and the rest of the minifig heroes tasked with seek-

ing out a legendary piece and halting Lord Business' (Will Ferrell) evil plans to freeze the world(s).

The two-disc DVD and UltraViolet set includes an "Everything Is Awesome" sing-along and the featurette *Fan-Made Films: Top Secret Submissions*. The Blu-ray combo (\$35.99) adds more: *Batman: A True Artist*, *Michelangelo and Lincoln: History Cops*, *Enter the Ninjago*, *Bringing LEGO to Life*, *See It! Build It! Stories*

from the Story Team, commentary, outtakes, deleted scenes, "Alleyway" test and promo content. Or, you can splurge on the three-disc Everything Is Awesome Edition (\$59.98), the only 3-D option which comes in special Emmet bust packaging with a Vitruvius minifig, plus exclusive feature *Dream Job: Meet the LEGO Builders*. Pick one and keep your brick fix going until the sequel arrives in 2017. [Release date: June 17]



The Boondocks: The Complete Fourth Season

[Sony, \$40.99]

The much-hyped "final" fourth season (hey, never assume you can keep those kids down) has gotten some flack for going forward without comic-strip and series creator Aaron McGruder, but this 10-episode un-

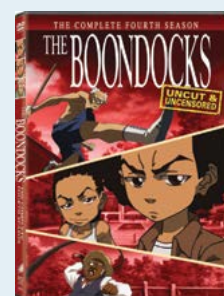
censored release still has plenty of the show's wild suburban adventures.

The two-disc set takes Granddad (John Witherspoon), Huey and Riley (Regina King) through all kinds of desperate measures to solve their money woes, from questionable chemistry in an RV lab to senior citizen street fights. The series also fea-

tures guest voice appearances from Michael B. Jordan, Dennis Haysbert and Ed Asner.

You can also look behind the scenes with special features *Boondocks Beats* and *A Writer's Perspective*. Misbehavior has never seemed so right.

[Release date: June 24]



Aaahh!!! Real Monsters: The Final Season

[Shout! Select, \$19.93]

Although it was beaten to the shelves by Shout's complete series set last year, those who had been collecting the Klasky-Csupo classic season by season can now round out their monstrous menagerie exclusively

through ShoutFactory.com.

The 13 two-parter episodes from the 1997 season once again send the sewer dwelling scarers-in-training Ickis (Charlie Adler), Oblina (Christine Cavanaugh) and Krumm (David Eccles) as they hone their talents on fear-mongering missions to the human world and avoid the watchful eye

of their ill-tempered headmaster The Gromble (Gregg Burger) and his assistant Zimbo (Tim Curry). Mad props to Shout! for offering another way for children of the 1990s to relive some of the highlights of their after school hours.

[Release date: June 10]



Regular Show: The Complete Third Season

[Warner, \$26.99]

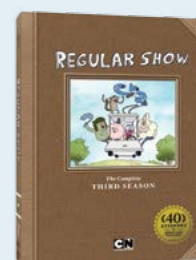
Fans of J.G. Quintel's smash-hit Cartoon Network series have to wait until January for season six episodes to get rolling, but at least they can add to their home entertainment

collections with this three-disc set.

In addition to all 40 season three episodes, the release offers episode commentary and the special features *Four Things You Didn't Know About J.G.* (which hopefully includes hair care tips), *J.G. Answers Why Animation* and *Characters Come to Life:*

Live Episode Read. So stop wasting your time playing punchies, tap into your mustache cash stash and get down with Mordecai and Rigby, their long-suffering boss Benson and the rest of the colorful public park characters.

[Release date: June 17]



Honorable Mentions:

I Know That Voice!

June 17 [Video Services Corp, \$19.95]

This Is America, Charlie Brown

June 17 [Warner, \$26.99]

Transformers: Animated – The Complete Series

June 10 [Shout! Factory, \$39.97]



DVD Q&A:

J.G. Quintel on *Regular Show* Season 3

Fans of Mordecai and Rigby, rejoice! The complete third season of Cartoon Network's hit series *Regular Show* has finally arrived on DVD in a three-disc set. By Tom McLean.

The release includes all 39 episodes from season three, which first aired from September 2011 to September 2012. The release also includes commentaries and featurettes, including one in which show creator and executive producer J.G. Quintel talks about why he likes to work in animation.

With the show currently airing its fifth season, we caught up with Quintel for a DVD-inspired walk down memory lane.

Animag: Looking back at the third season, what was significant about it for you in terms of the development of the show?

Well, it was a big change for us because we'd already done our first two seasons, which the network wanted to really focus on Mordecai and Rigby. All the stories needed to be Mordecai- and Rigby-centric. Once we had those 40 done, we started opening it up to the secondary characters, so we got to see more stories that focused on Skip and Benson and Pops and Muscle Man, and get to know more about them. So it makes for a nicer blend, as far as all the episodes go. And then, we have some really great episodes in there. Our Emmy-winning episode, "Eggcellent," is in season three, and a bunch of my favorite episodes.

Animag: Do you like working in the quarter-hour format? What are the advantages for you of working in that format?

I'm definitely more comfortable in the 11-minute format because I came up in the industry doing that. I was on *Camp Lazlo* and then *Flapjack*, and they both utilized the 11-minute format, so I kind of understand how long everything should be when we're writing these things up. But we do have a few half-hour episodes that we have done and they're really satisfying when you pull them off. But every time we try them they are very difficult. I do enjoy doing the 11-minute format, but when the 30 minutes work, they can be really awesome. I have a lot of respect for the guys who are doing shows that are "only" 30 minutes because it is really hard to write those things.

Animag: Some shows take a while to find their groove. Was this that sort of season for you guys? Or do you feel like you'd already found it by that point?

We were getting close to it, but season three we defi-

nately started to jell more. People really took the show on and understood it, and at this point everybody had 40 episodes under their belts, so people were getting better at it. There were less revisions to be done on our end, as far as overseeing it. And if you look at the credits you'll notice that in seasons one and two, I had storyboarded or helped to storyboard quite a few of the episodes. And then in season three, there's only maybe one or two, because everybody was really getting it, and we'd hired on a few more board artists so that the crew was kind of filling in and we were starting to run a little more smoothly.

Animag: Was there anything about that season that surprised you or turned out really well or made you think, "I never thought we'd get to do that!"?

The Mordecai-Margaret storyline, and the way it shaped up. Initially, when Cartoon Network picked up the show, they wanted all stand-alone episodes. And they didn't want to do anything that felt serialized. It always needed to restart, so we were fresh for the next episode. But we did start putting in this romantic arc between Mordecai and Margaret, where he was kind of pursuing her, or at least seeing her from afar, and we were being very blatant about it. And then, by the end of the season, to end up with him trying to kiss her and messing it up and then wanting to take it back was kind of a big step for us. Usually, you try to stay away from stories like that because you don't want to damage the relationship structures that you have built.

Animag: You mentioned you had brought in some new storyboard artists. Was there anything on the visual end of things with the animation that stands out from season three?

I think it was one of the seasons where you could really start to tell that everything was clicking. If you look at season one, you can really tell they just started, because the characters look a little off model and they're a little wonky here and there. There's some scenes that are pretty sloppy looking. And then, once we get to season three, it's all really tight. The style has been set. We know what it needs to look like every time, so it's



more consistent, for sure.

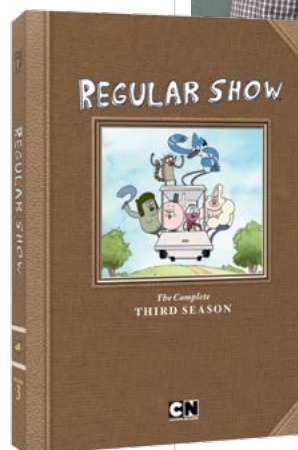
Animag: When you go back and do a commentary track, is that fun or do you find things that make you say "ouch!"?

That can happen. Because all the episodes, you're so close to and you have to go over them so many times where they're burned into your brain permanently. And when you get those ones where you're a little late and you're like,

"Well, this is the best we can do for this one." And there's still a couple of stories where they're not my favorites because we were still making small mistakes in the writers room, where we'd push something through and then realize there's a structural problem, but there's also some episodes that are really awesome, where I'm like, "Everything about that one worked! How come that one did and that one didn't?" And it's a learning experience to go back through so much later and be able to have fresh eyes and just watch them and kind of enjoy them and have a couple of those memories pop up whether they're good or bad.

Animag: You have season five airing now and you're up for season six, so you are going to be at this for a while longer.

Yes. We have a ways to go and we're still coming up with some of our best episodes, even now, which is really exciting for me because after 150 in the writers room, you come up with a lot of episodes that sound great and then people are like, "We already did that." ♦



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